DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

# Children drawing their own conclusions: Trans-generational transmission of experiences of war and peace

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# Children drawing their own conclusions:
# Trans-generational transmission of experiences of war and peace

by

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**Abstract**

As a society coming out of a protracted intra-state political conflict, Northern Ireland is still dealing with issues related to its “troubled” past. However, neither the mechanism by which trans-generational transmission of knowledge and memories about violent events occurs, nor how children perceive the notion of peace while still living in a divided society, has been systematically examined. This study explores how children born after the peace agreement understand their own lives and those of their predecessors, and to what extent parental experiences of the conflict influence children’s perceptions.

In total, 179 children aged 10-11 years old drew two pictures, one about living in Northern Ireland now and another one about living in Northern Ireland before they were born. The children were then asked to briefly explain their drawings. 73 parents of these children completed a questionnaire about their conflict related experience, their opinions and attitudes, and their communication with their children. While the majority of children’s drawings (92%) depicted elements of peace and hope, especially regarding the present (88%), 39% also portrayed violence, especially regarding the past (36%). Children’s depictions varied depending on their gender, age and type of school they attended. Trans-generational transmission of personal memories was found to be related to much more than just parental experience. Children who depicted violence in the pictures on the past were somewhat more likely to have parents who had talked to them about their violent experiences. Implications for history teaching were also drawn.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. STUDY OVERVIEW

In Northern Ireland, efforts to bring about a political settlement and an end to more than 30 years of conflict, a period colloquially known as 'the Troubles', culminated in the bi-lateral paramilitary ceasefires in 1994, a peace agreement in 1998, and the announced decommissioning of paramilitary groups in 2005 and 2009. Currently, frequent rioting, the potential (and actual) "threat" from dissident paramilitary groups, and the existence of almost 60 peace walls, some almost 30 feet high, confirm the continuation of sectarian divisions, attitudes, and conflict. Nonetheless, Northern Ireland has come a long way out of armed conflict. Incidents of violence specifically related to the Troubles have decreased dramatically since 1998. The historic developments of 8th May 2007, which resulted in the restoration of devolution with a power-sharing government, have signalled the beginning of a new era for Northern Ireland. Reaching this point has required huge efforts by many people, and the human cost of the Troubles has been high, with approximately 3,722 people killed (McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, Thornton & McVea, 2007) and over 40,000 injured (Fay, Morrissey & Smyth, 1998).

This study essentially aimed to explore to what extent (if any) parents' experiences and views of those violent times influenced how children born after the peace agreement perceived life in a society that is on the one hand, "post-conflict", at least in political terms, but on the other remains socially, culturally and structurally segregated, and within some local areas is still violently divided.

The data collection for the study took place between November 2008 and April 2010. Children aged 9-11 years old were asked, within their own classrooms, to draw two pictures about the present and the past of Northern Ireland, and briefly explain their drawings, while their parents were asked to complete a short questionnaire on their political opinions, gender attitudes, Troubles-related experience, and communication with their children. The drawings illustrated these children's present-day lives in Northern Ireland, and the lives of their predecessors, and showed whether or not, and to what extent, the concepts of violence or conflict and peace featured in their depictions, while the parental questionnaires revealed their parents' political views and

experiences. By putting the two sets of data together, interesting associations between the children's illustrations and the parents' views and experiences were uncovered.

## 2. STUDY RATIONALE

Children have been regarded as the hope for a peaceful society in countries that have just come out of a long political civil conflict. However, how do girls and boys in these societies understand war and peace? How do they view their countries' violent past and their 'potentially peaceful' present? How does their process of socialisation (and gender socialisation) in the family affect their set of beliefs and views on these issues? A plethora of research has developed around the subject of children's understanding and awareness of war, peace, and conflict. In parallel, some attention has been drawn to gender differences when looking at how children think and feel about war and peace (Hall, 1993). However, some of these questions remain unanswered.

The proposal for this study was developed as a response to the findings of a study that the researcher previously worked on, the PAVE project (Dillenburger, Fargas & Akhonzada, 2007), which aimed to explore the effectiveness of the services provided by voluntary community groups working with those affected by the Troubles. The PAVE project found that some people who had been affected by the Troubles over thirty years ago still appeared severely 'traumatised', having flashbacks and/or sleeping problems (Dillenburger, Fargas & Akhonzada, 2008), which often also seemed to be affecting their attitudes towards the "other" community. That led to the question of how and to what extent these traumatic experiences and their psychological and social effects were passed on to subsequent generations.

## 3. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This research project had three initial key aims:

***Aim 1:*** The first aim of the study was to explore how children born after the peace agreement, and therefore with no memory of the Troubles, perceive life in Northern Ireland in the present times and in the past, before they were born. How do they feel it is like growing up in their neighbourhoods? Do they feel there is peace? What knowledge do they have of the Troubles? How did they gain this knowledge? Children

born after the peace agreement might be in the best place to answer these questions. In fact, the methodological framework underpinning this research starts from the premise that children are social actors who can express themselves in their own right, and who are experts on their own lives.

***Aim 2:*** It has been argued that 'the violent experiences of this generation of adults can be passed on to subsequent generations' (Smyth, 1998, pp. 26-27). However, while most of the recent research has focused on children's perceptions of violence and attitudes towards the Troubles (McLernon, Ferguson, & Cairns, 1997; McLernon, 1998; Muldoon, 2003; Connolly & Healey, 2004), much less is known about how, and to what extent, parents transmit their experiences of (and views on) the Troubles to their children. Relatively recently, a study found that some young people in Northern Ireland, even those with no direct experience of political violence, had taken up their parents and relatives' past painful memories as something very personal, and embraced attitudes of bitterness and anger towards the 'other' community, while others, in contrast, expressed their desire to dissociate themselves from such past divisions (McGrellis, 2004). Thus, a second aim of this study was to explore how much, if anything, of the parents' memories and views are transmitted to their children.

***Aim 3:*** Previous research with children found gender differences in a variety of issues (i.e. understandings of war and peace, experiences of violence, and levels of geographical movement) (e.g. Hall, 1993; Parkes, 2007; Leonard, 2007), therefore the third aim of this project was to explore gender differences in children's understandings of life pre- and post-conflict. To what extent do girls and boys understand their lives in Northern Ireland differently? Do their views on the past differ? Do differences in their views reflect differences in the communication between them and their parents?

## 4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The first two chapters constitute a review of the relevant literature, and set the study within its theoretical context and background. The third chapter details how the study was conducted and analysed, and it specifically explains the ethical and methodological issues that were encountered. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the results. Finally, the last chapter discusses the findings in the context of existing literature, and draws conclusions.

# CHAPTER 1: LIVING WITH CONFLICT: THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Northern Ireland, the lives of many young people have been touched by over thirty years of persistent civil unrest, political conflict and sectarian division. However, it has recently been argued that 'the understanding of the long-term effects of political violence on young people is underdeveloped' (Kilkelly, Kilpatrick, Lundy, Moore, Scraton *et al.*, 2004, p. xvi). That is despite the fact that the conflict in this country has been one of the most researched conflicts in the world, with many of these projects focusing on children and young people (Schubotz & Devine, 2008).

This chapter describes how the violent conflict in Northern Ireland has shaped the lives of various generations of children and young people. Local research is contextualised within the international literature on societies coming out of political conflict. In the first section, the legacy of the conflict is examined, and variables determining the degree to which someone was affected by the violence are identified. In the second section, the debate about victims and survivors is outlined. The third section focuses on the variety of ways children and young people have been or are still affected by this violence. The following four sections review the literature on the impact of the conflict on children's psychological wellbeing; the school system and history education, in particular; children's identities and sectarian attitudes; and finally, children's understandings of peace and war.

## 2. THE LEGACY OF "THE TROUBLES"

Northern Ireland has lived with a situation of protracted civil unrest and conflict since 1969, a period colloquially known as "the Troubles". The Northern Ireland conflict, which has a considerably long history, is much more complex than simply a conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and whether Northern Ireland should be part of the Republic of Ireland or under the rule of Britain, as it involves issues of nationality, class, culture and religion.

The Troubles have obviously had an enormous social, psychological, ideological, and economic impact on the people living in the region. In fact, the conflict has meant the death of over 3,600 people, the injury of about 40,000 (Fay *et al.*, 1998; Bloomfield, 1998; McKittrick *et al.*, 2007), and the intimidation and attack of many others; the psychological suffering of thousands (O'Reilly & Stevenson, 2003); a sharp deepening of the segregation of the two communities, in terms of where people live (Poole & Doherty, 1996; Shuttleworth & Lloyd, 2009), go to school (with only 5% of children attending an integrated school; Smith, 2001) or even shop and socialize (Jarman & Bell, 2009; Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006); an increase of sectarian prejudice and attitudes (Connolly & Healy, 2004); and the aggravation of economic difficulties and poverty for many families (Hillyard, Rolston & Tomlinson, 2005). For example, in a study on poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland, half of all household respondents said they knew someone who had been killed in the conflict (Hillyard, Kelly, McLaughlin, Patsios & Tomlinson, 2003).

Thus, despite the fact that Northern Ireland now is considered to be a "post-conflict" society, children, young people, and their families and communities, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, still experience the legacies of the conflict: sectarian incidents, bitterness and prejudice, residential and social segregation, violent bereavement, paramilitary punishment beatings and shootings, differential policing, intimidation and threats, regular rioting, significant mental health problems, increase in suicides, poverty, and social exclusion (Connolly & Maginn, 1999; Gallagher, 2004a; Healey, 2004; Kennedy, 2001; Leonard, 2006a; McAlister, Scraton & Haydon, 2009; Smyth, Fay, Brough & Hamilton, 2004). In fact, some young people continue to be exposed to political violence (Muldoon, Cassidy & McCullough, 2009). Therefore, some argue that Northern Ireland, rather than a "post-conflict" society, could be better described as a "society in transition" (Coulter & Murray, 2008). It should be noted, however, that the 'end of war does not always mean the end of violence, nor does it mean that the problems that led to the outbreak of the war have been resolved' (Dupuy & Peters, 2010, p. 104). Thus, sustained occurrence of violence in societies emerging from conflict/war appear to be a common feature, as structural conditions created by the political conflict (e.g. presence of ex-combatants and armed groups such as paramilitaries able and willing to use violence; proliferation of weapons; and severe poverty and social exclusion) facilitate the continued use of several types of violence

(i.e. economic, social and political violence) (Steenkamp, 2011). In that sense, then, Northern Ireland is not that different from other societies that have signed peace accords.

However, the most severe consequences of the conflict have not been (and are still) experienced by everybody living in Northern Ireland to the same degree, or with the same intensity or across time. In other words, the violence of the Troubles has widely varied in terms of location, time, quality (Smyth, 1998), and other factors, such as gender and age. The level of violence varied across time, with the frequency of bombings and shootings particularly high in the first decades of the Troubles, that is, in the early and mid 1970s. The year 1972 saw the largest amount of deaths and violent incidents than any other year, with almost 2,000 explosions, over 10,000 shooting incidents, and almost 5,000 people injured (McKittrick & McVea, 2000). Violence continued through subsequent decades, although patterns of violence changed, and conflict-related deaths decreased, as most of them happened in the first decade of the Troubles (Fay, Morrissey & Smyth, 1999, p. 136). For instance, between 1970 and 1975, there were 1,486 deaths, whereas between 1989 and 1994, there were 494 deaths (Sutton, 2001). However, more recently, between 2007 and 2009, five deaths still occurred because of ongoing political violence in the region (Devine, Kelly & Robinson, 2011).

In terms of location, in some areas, families experienced multiple bereavements and were exposed to numerous violent incidents, while other areas in Northern Ireland have almost been untouched by the violence. For instance, the majority of the Troubles-related deaths occurred in North and West Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, the border regions and the Craigavon – Portadown area, while coastal areas were less affected (Fay *et al.*, 1999; Smyth *et al.*, 2004). Interface and enclave areas in Belfast and Derry were particularly affected by political violence during the early days of the Troubles, and again more recently when high levels of post-ceasefire violence were experienced (Jarman, 2004). Economically disadvantaged areas, characterised by poverty and social exclusion, have been most affected by the conflict and its violence (Hillyard *et al.*, 2005).

In terms of gender, the level of violence has not been equally felt by men and women either, in fact, the Troubles have affected women and men differently. On one hand,

the vast majority (over 90 per cent) of those killed were male (Fay *et al.*, 1999), while on the other hand, women were affected in a variety of other ways, such as bereavement, intimidation, or witnessing of violence (see Chapter 2). In terms of age, young men were particularly affected by the Troubles in terms of deaths and injuries, with those under 24 years old accounting for approximately 40 per cent of all conflict-related deaths (Fay *et al.*, 1999).

Therefore, over thirty years of political violence and civil unrest have not constituted a homogeneous experience for everybody in Northern Ireland. Each person has had different and unique experiences of the conflict that, in turn, produced different impacts and effects on their lives and wellbeing (Dillenburger, Fargas, Kelly & Akhonzada, 2006). Moreover, as not everybody responds in the same way to the same distressing experience, while some people consider themselves "victims", others with similar experiences do not. The concept of victimhood and its hierarchies and legitimacy are explored in the next section.

## 3. THE CONCEPT OF VICTIMHOOD IN NORTHERN IRELAND

With only a few exceptions (e.g. Darby & Williamson, 1978; Dillenburger, 1992), the impact that the Troubles had on people's lives was largely ignored for many years, and the need to address the suffering of those affected was only acknowledged at the start of the peace process in the mid 1990s. The debate about victims and survivors of the Troubles emerged and intensified then, as the government began to pay much more attention to those who had been bereaved and injured, for example, by commissioning reports (Bloomfield, 1998), setting up a Victims Unit as part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, developing a Victims Strategy (Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve, 2002) (Dillenburger, Fargas & Akhonzada, 2005), and appointing a Victims Commissioner. Meanwhile, the requests for help as well as funding for services increased, with £44 million of central government and European funding being allocated since 1998 to a variety of organisations aimed at supporting victims and survivors of the conflict (McDougall, 2006). As a result, voluntary organisations dealing with those affected by the Troubles (i.e. providing a range of interventions/services aimed to improve their quality of life) and victims' advocacy groups experienced a rapid growth (Dillenburger *et al.*, 2007; Kelly & Smyth, 1999). Thus, the issue of who qualifies as a "real victim" and "hierarchies of victimhood" surfaced. The definition of victim in

Northern Ireland acquired both universal and exclusive connotations (Morrissey & Smyth, 2002). On one hand, it was acknowledged that in some way the Troubles had affected nearly everybody living in Northern Ireland. For example, the report by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield in 1998 suggested that everybody in Northern Ireland could be considered a victim of the Troubles, as he defined the victims of the conflict as 'the surviving injured and those who care for them, together with those close relatives who mourn their dead' (p. 14). However, on the other hand, internal disputes emerged among groups who 'label themselves "real victims" or "innocent victims" and by doing so, they automatically decree other groups of victims to be "non-innocent"' (Kulle, 2001, p. 82). This issue is exemplified by the wording of the Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) ceasefire statement in 1994, which illustrated distinctions between "innocent victims" and not-so-innocent victims; and also by the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) statement of regret in 2002 offering sincere apologies to the families of non-combatants (Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood, 2010).

In sum, in Northern Ireland, the debate focusing on determining who has the rights to the label "victim" is contested and challenged, as it is politically loaded and follows well-established *sectarian* lines (Ferguson *et al.,* 2010; Dillenburger *et al.*, 2005). Thus, victim issues are highly politicised (Brewer & Hayes, 2011a). However, the problems faced by the Northern Irish society in dealing with its past, defining who the victims are, acknowledging their suffering and addressing their needs are not unique, but common to other societies coming out of intra-state conflicts, such as South Africa (e.g. Hamber, 1998), El Salvador, Chile and Guatemala (Ferguson *et al.*, 2010). Every conflict creates its own victims (Ferguson *et al.*, 2010), but this label can be read in both negative and positive terms. Whereas on one hand, it conjures up stereotypes of vulnerability, passivity, weakness, of needing protection, and of belonging to a social group that may be considered particularly vulnerable, as well as being used as an object of political and media campaigns to serve particular interests and motivations; on the other hand, there may be some benefits of victimisation such as sympathy, attention, an attained superior "moral status" (Brewer & Hayes, 2011a), validation and credit, assistance, support, or financial compensation (Dillenburger *et al.*, 2005). These two dimensions of the label might illustrate a distinction between "group victimhood" and "individual victimhood", where "group victimhood" would be a powerful label offering support and legitimacy for the in-group, but for the individual, the label would be negative,

threatening one's agency, ignoring resilience, and signalling weakness and passivity (Ferguson *et al.*, 2010).

Within situations of armed conflict, children have traditionally been seen and treated as victims, following the dominant idea of childhood as a universal construct built on notions of vulnerability, dependence and incompetence, which ignores their agency and focuses on their physical and psychological needs, which prevail over their social and economic ones (Boyden, 2003) (see Chapter 2, where notions of childhood are exposed). The focus in this chapter will be on the different impacts that the conflict has had on children and young people. Next section concentrates on how children and young people were directly affected by the violence during the early years of the conflict, but also in the post-agreement period, as well as how they took and are currently taking part in the violence.

## 4. CHILDREN: VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS?

*'… the nature of war has changed considerably during the last 60 years or so. The number of wars between two or more states (interstate conflicts) has gradually declined since the end of WWII, with nearly all armed conflicts taking place today being civil (or intrastate) conflicts. … The changing character of war also had an impact on children and young people. Young people have been victims of and participants in wars throughout history, but never to the extent that they are today.'* (Dupuy & Peters, 2010, p. 3)

Young people in Northern Ireland have experienced directly or indirectly decades of political (intra-state) conflict and violence. Children and young people have been seriously victimised by the violence. By 1998, nearly 26 per cent of all those killed in the Troubles were aged 21 or less. While 7 per cent of all deaths were children aged between 0 and 17 years (n= 257), young people aged 18-23 years had experienced the highest death rate for any age group in Northern Ireland (25% of all deaths; n=898) (Smyth, 1998).

However, the effects of the Troubles on children are more far-reaching than deaths and injuries. As Cairns (1987) put it, for each child killed or injured in the Troubles, 'there have been many more who at some time must have felt their life was threatened and

more still who have had to witness the horror of death or injury inflicted upon others' (p.47). In other words, children lost parents and other family members; they witnessed bomb explosions and shootings, and had their houses attacked with petrol bombs and stones. How children and young people dealt with these experiences depended on many factors. As argued earlier, children (and adults) in Northern Ireland inhabit very different social worlds (Connolly & Healy, 2004), and therefore their experience of the conflict depended on many factors, including where they lived, their social and economic background, as well as their social and emotional relationships with parents, family, peers, and other adults, such as teachers.

The effects of the violence are not all in the past. Despite the political developments throughout the peace process (i.e. the 1994 ceasefires, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the St Andrews Agreement in October 2006, the restoration of devolution in May 2007, and the announced decommissioning of paramilitary groups in 2005 and 2009), some children and young people in Northern Ireland are still directly affected by sectarian violence. Indeed, sectarian violence, although at a lower level, has continued, particularly in interface areas (i.e. areas where segregated, polarised working-class zones meet); and residential, educational and cultural segregation still divides communities in Northern Ireland. According to Smyth and Campbell (2005), 'in Belfast alone, there are twenty-seven interfaces where sporadic violence punctuates the lives of residents' (p.1), and these are separated by symbolic and physical barriers, such as peace walls/lines. Jarman (2005) highlighted that during the first ten years after the ceasefires (1994-2004), nearly 14,000 people sought re-housing due to sectarian, racist or paramilitary intimidation; no interface barriers had been removed, and in Belfast, 18 new barriers had been built, extended or raised. In 2001, paramilitary "punishment" attacks and shootings were more common in Northern Ireland than previously thought, and attacks on children and young people had actually increased since 1998 (Kennedy, 2001). In fact, according to police figures, between 1999 and 2009, there were 1,958 casualties from "paramilitary-style" shootings and assaults (PSNI, 2009; cited in McAlister *et al.*, 2009), and that does not take into account less "serious" attacks that would occur unreported. Moreover, in early 2011, the security threat from dissident Republicans was classified as "severe" (McDonald, 2011).

Children and young people living in certain areas seem to be particularly affected by these forms of violence. Young people's exposure to political violence and perceptions

of what is “normal” in a certain area seem to hugely vary across the region (Magill, Smith & Hamber, 2009). Leonard (2007) found that between a third to half of the teenagers from three of the four participating schools in her study, who lived in North Belfast, defined their homes as unsafe, and described dangers related to the political conflict between the two communities; particularly those living at the edge of the interface, who gave accounts of incidents of their homes having been attacked. Although schools have been described as places of safety, teenagers also identified their journeys to and from school, and the school itself as potentially risky. That was particularly the case for the majority of teenagers from the three schools who were closer to the interface (Leonard, 2006b). The teenagers’ perceptions were based on their frequent experiences of being physically or verbally attacked on their way to school and within school grounds. A small number of the teenagers who took part in the study had difficulties coping with these experiences; they had nightmares, were afraid of the dark, or were on medication to help them sleep. Thus, as Hansson (2005) thought,

*‘The sectarian geography and divisions impinge considerably on the lives of young people, through restricting movement, limiting access to resources and generally narrowing their social horizons.’* (p. 69)

In 2007, 5% of the 16 year-old respondents of the Young Life and Times Survey did not feel safe in their own neighbourhoods (ARK, 2007); in 2003, 59% of the Protestant respondents felt less safe in mainly Catholic areas, while 61% of the Catholic respondents felt less safe in mainly Protestant areas (ARK, 2003); and in 2004, 30% of the respondents had a family member or friend that had been injured due to a sectarian incident and 8% had directly been threatened by a paramilitary group (Morrow, 2008). In 2003, 65% of (599) children in primary schools in Belfast reported considerable experience with political violence, 7% having been picked up by the police, 31% being caught up in a riot, 37% seeing/hearing people shooting guns; and 38% hearing a bomb go off (Muldoon *et al.*, 2009). In another recent study, children and young people were found to have experienced the Troubles to some degree by virtue of two main factors: where they lived (i.e. children from areas that had experienced significant levels of sectarian violence); and their parents’ relationship to the conflict (e.g. children of police officers, army personnel or ex-combatants); and, in contrast with findings from Bosnia-Herzegovina, experience of the conflict was not limited to just one age group of

children/young people (Magill *et al.*, 2009). Thus, without a doubt, and contrary to the common belief that young people born after the ceasefire have barely any awareness or experience of the political conflict in Northern Ireland, children have been affected by the continuance of the sectarian/political violence (e.g. Leitch, 2008).

Apart from having been the recipients of violence, young people have also been engaged in the conflict, as young paramilitaries or rioters (Cairns, 1987). The participation of children and young people in different forms of sectarian violence during the Troubles and, more recently, in sectarian "anti-social behaviour" has been highlighted by politicians, the police, community workers, and the media (Cairns, 1987; Hansson, 2005), "demonising" children and young people, and spiralling fears and "moral panics" among the community. In the early days, some children and young people were actively involved in street rioting (Cairns, 1987). More recently, children and young people living in interface areas keep on participating in sporadic outbreaks of violence or "disturbances", including verbal attacks and throwing stones, bottles or fireworks (McAlister *et al.*, 2009). These forms of violence, increasingly popular among children living in these areas, have been coined as "recreational rioting" (Jarman & O'Halloran, 2001, p.2). This is more common among young men and boys (rather than girls), who also often engage in joy riding, petty crime, vandalism, stone throwing and fights with peers from the "other" community. Research has suggested that children see this violence as "something exciting" and "fun". It seems that sometimes adults encourage this kind of behaviour, and other times they condemn it, thus giving confusing and opposing messages to young people (cf. Hansson, 2005). When they are asked about their violent behaviour, young people state that "they have nothing else to do" (Hansson, 2005). In particular, in deprived areas, young people feel that there is a lack of facilities in their local communities, which would allow them to engage in meaningful activities (Smyth, 1998; Kelly, 2002; Leonard, 2006a).

However, Leonard (2010) is critical about the label of "recreational rioting". She claims that this label is used to describe riots that are mainly orchestrated by children and young people, in contrast with what has been considered as more "serious" rioting, namely riots where adults take part, either alone or along with children. She argues that the label does not reflect the fact that 'children's sectarian identity is expressed and experienced through rioting' (p.47), and that it does not take place in a social vacuum, but is often motivated by wider socio-political events like a match between Rangers

(team supported mainly by the Protestant community) and Celtic (team supported mainly by the Catholic community), or the marching season. Thus, more deeply, it is being used as 'a mechanism for demonstrating religious/sectarian identity… a way of emphasising the internal cohesiveness of the group' (Leonard, 2004, p. 44; cited in McAlister *et al.*, 2009). In fact, according to Steenkamp (2011), rioting can be common in societies emerging from war as an expression of violence that was "learnt" during the conflict, and continues to exist to strengthen social identities and bonds between members of a group, in addition to voice discontent, and express frustration with the progress of the peace process and grievances about relative gains and losses.

In addition to the rioting, community representatives and young people in a recent study have claimed that young people are still being recruited into paramilitary or dissident groups that persuade them to adopt their agenda and steer them towards violence, inflaming and inciting sectarianism: 'They considered that young people were heavily politicised through interpretations of the past, glorification of violence and discussions about how politicians had "sold out"' (McAlister *et al.*, 2009, p. 108). These young people appear to then become the "new recruiters" that control and influence the younger children (ibid).

After reviewing how political violence affected and still affects children and young people in Northern Ireland, Section 5 explores the psychological impact of violence on children.

## 5. THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

*'You're just hoping that nobody else gets shot. Or killed. Or murdered. You know, like, you've been brought up in it, and it's, like, to be truthful, like, none of us here know what it's like to live in peace, like. We've been living in the war all our lives, and it just doesn't seem as if it is war to us. It just seems as if it's just normal, you know. When somebody gets shot, you go, 'Auch, I feel sorry for them.' But really what you're saying inside is that you're glad that it wasn't one of your family. That's the way people react nowadays…'* (Young woman quoted in Smyth, 1998, p.69)

One of the main concerns of research on the effects of the Troubles on children is the impact of the conflict on children's mental health. Internationally, a review of empirical

quantitative studies on the impact of political violence on adolescents found that most studies were exclusively concerned in measuring psychological problems, and the large majority concluded that exposure to violence was associated with higher levels of negative functioning (Barber & Schluterman, 2009). However, this issue has been strongly debated in Northern Ireland (Muldoon, 2004). While in the early years, it was suggested that children's psychological wellbeing had been severely affected by the conflict (Fraser, 1974; Lyons, 1979), from the 1980s on, it was argued that most children (and adults) had been able to cope effectively with the violence, through denial (i.e. reluctance to perceive that there is a high level of violence in their area; McIvor, 1981) and/or habituation (i.e. becoming so used to the violence to be able to see it as a normal aspect of everyday life; McWhirter, 1983) (Cairns, 1987). The few researchers who found contrary result during this period, indicating long-term intensive psychological distress, for example in violently bereaved widows (Dillenburger, 1992) or victims of the Enniskillen bombing (Curran, Bell, Murray, Loughrey, Roddy & Rocke, 1990), were largely ignored in the general research literature of the time.

However, recently, doubt has been cast on the belief that all children can successfully adjust to conflict and political violence (Gallagher, 2004a; Morrissey and Smyth, 2002). Increasing evidence speaks of long-term effects and psychological suffering due to the Troubles among adults (Hayes and Campbell, 2000; O'Reilly and Stevenson, 2003; Dillenburger *et al.*, 2007), and of the emotional/psychological effects of exposure to community/sectarian violence among children and young people in "post-conflict" Northern Ireland (e.g. depression, low self-esteem, risk of suicide, substance misuse, etc.) (e.g. Muldoon & Trew, 2000; McAloney, McCrystal, Percy & McCartan, 2009). For instance, Smyth (1997) found that around 50% of people, who had lost loved ones over 20 years ago, still showed symptoms of emotional distress and effects such as sleep disturbance. More recently, O'Reilly and Stevenson (2003) suggested that there is 'a positive and graded relation between the extent to which people and areas were affected by the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the likelihood of suffering from significant mental health problems' (p.491).

Thus, if adults have been so severely psychologically scarred by the violence, how does that impact on their children? Fraser (1974) and Lyons (1979) had already highlighted the importance of parents' reactions to the violence of the Troubles for their children's own mental health (Muldoon, Trew & Kilpatrick, 2000). Smyth (1998) also

argued that witnessing the effect of violent event/s or loss on the parents might be very damaging for the child's psychological wellbeing and that the relationship between the parent and the child could become severely affected:

*'The disempowering and traumatic effect of trauma on the adult parent directly impacts on their relationships with the children in several obvious ways. The avoidance of discussion about the trauma places a constraint on the parent-child relationship. … Children also avoid raising painful subjects, in the belief that to do so will protect parents from distress. In some cases, the excessive use of – or dependence on – alcohol or drugs complicates the picture, and becomes a way of maintaining the avoidance within the family of painful topics.'* (Smyth, 1998, p.36)

More recently, Merrilees, Cairns, Goeke-Morey *et al.* (2011) gave evidence of the serious effects of parents' trauma on their children's emotional wellbeing, and found that mothers' perceived impact of the Troubles in their lives was associated with their own mental health (as measured by the General Health Questionnaire), which in turn was related to their child's psychological adjustment (as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire).

However, there is no clear evidence on the ways parents and other adult family members communicate or fail to communicate about their past difficult experiences to their children. Thus, in order to help make transformation to a 'peaceful' society possible, these issues need to be systematically examined. Are painful topics always avoided within families? Furthermore, considering that communication is a two-way process, to what extent do children communicate about their own experiences of political violence to their parents and relatives? Finally, does this communication or lack of thereof influence how children see themselves and others? One piece of research cannot answer all these questions, and this thesis is no exception, but some will be partly addressed in next chapter, and also in Chapter 6, describing the findings of the study. Next section explores the impact of the conflict on another social institution other than the family, namely schools and the education system.

## 6. IMPACT ON SCHOOLING AND HISTORY EDUCATION

In societies coming out of conflict, schooling has been closely associated to discourses of peace-building and conflict resolution; as education has been acknowledged 'as much part of the solution as the cause of violent strife.' (van Ommering, 2011, p.544).

As is the case with other ethno-nationally divided societies, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, the school system in Northern Ireland is highly segregated along sectarian lines, but also in terms of academic achievement. The education system has a complex structure, as schools fall under different management types and also differ in terms of levels of funding. There are four main categories of schools: controlled, maintained, voluntary grammar,and grant-maintained integrated schools (Byrne & Donnelly, 2006). Controlled schools (nursery, primary, special, secondary and grammar schools) (mostly Protestant) are managed by Education and Library Boards through Boards of Governors, usually containing representatives from the Protestant churches, parents, teachers and nominees of the ELBs. Voluntary schools are managed by Boards of Governors, who are also the employer of teaching and non-teaching staff. There are two types of voluntary schools – voluntary maintained and voluntary non-maintained schools, which are mainly voluntary grammar schools, funded directly by the Department. Voluntary maintained schools are owned by trustees, and managed by Boards of Governors. The majority are Catholic maintained schools, which fall under the domain of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), established by the 1989 Order. There are two types of integrated schools. Grant-maintained integrated schools are owned and managed by Boards of Governors, supported by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and funded directly by the Department of Education. Controlled integrated schools are managed by the regional education authority. The first integrated school was Lagan College, which was established in Belfast in 1981, followed by three others that opened in 1985, also in Belfast (Smith, 1999). There are also independent schools that do not receive funding from the Department, and finally a number of Irish Medium schools (most are primary schools), where children are taught through Irish in more than half the compulsory subjects (excluding English). These are owned and managed by Boards of Governors, supported by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and, generally, funded by the Department of Education.

The majority of children (95%) attend either maintained (Catholic) or controlled (mostly Protestant) schools, both publically funded. Recent government statistics show that 93% of all Protestant primary school children attend one of the 389 controlled schools, while 92% of all Catholic primary school children attend one of the 422 maintained schools (DENI, 2011) (Table 1.1). Currently, there are 61 integrated schools, 41 of which are primary schools, which have been established to bring together pupils and staff from all religious and non-religious backgrounds.

*Table 1.1: Religion of pupils by school type 2009/2010 (Only primary: Year 1 – Year 7)*

| | Protestant | Catholic | Other Christian | Non-Christian | Other religion/not recorded | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Controlled | 52,520 | 3,645 | 2,897 | 529 | 11,489 | 71,080 |
| Maintained | 761 | 71,399 | 228 | 232 | 747 | 73,367 |
| Controlled Integrated | 1,394 | 763 | 168 | 33 | 572 | 2,930 |
| Grant-Maintained Integrated | 1,826 | 2,211 | 273 | 57 | 808 | 5,175 |
| TOTAL | 56,501 | 78,018 | 3,566 | 851 | 13,616 | 152,552 |

Source: Department of Education of Northern Ireland (DENI), 2011

The segregation is aggravated by the fact that 'there are no specific provisions in the Education Orders to ensure that educational provision is made without discrimination on the basis of religion' (Smith, 1999, p.56).

This segregation appears to be resistant to change, and is well entrenched in Northern Irish people's outlooks. Although many young people's attitudes have been shifting towards a preference on mixing (rather than remaining segregated), certain views on educational segregation have stayed the same for many. In 2009, the Young People's Life and Times Survey found that if they had a choice, 60% of 16 year-olds would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood; 74% would prefer to work in a mixed-religion workplace; but only 45% would send their own children to a mixed-religion school (ARK, 2009). This latter percentage has actually diminished since 2007, when 49% of the 16 year-olds said that they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school.

Segregation in the school system in Northern Ireland, as in other societies affected by conflict like Cyprus (Zembylas, 2010), could be considered both as a symptom, but

also as perpetuating division and conflict. In fact, a segregated denominational education system already existed long before the outbreak of the conflict in 1969, and was often blamed as contributing to community division and helping reproduce conflict (Gallagher, 2004b). Since then, three different theories have been offered to explain the impact of segregated education in Northern Ireland's society (Gallagher, 2004b). The 'cultural hypothesis' emphasised differences in the curriculum of the segregated schools, as enhancing community divisions. The 'social hypothesis' claimed that a segregated schooling system encouraged mutual ignorance and mutual suspicion, by emphasising group differences, regardless of the curriculum. Finally, the third perspective suggested that segregated education was irrelevant and that the conflict was mainly explained by material inequalities and injustice. Since a consensus was never reached among educationalists, three large intervention strategies were followed to help promote reconciliation and tolerance among pupils. The first strategy consisted of introducing curricular initiatives within the existing education system. One of these initiatives is the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme, initiated in 1983, which encouraged schools to bring in themes related to community relations as part of their curriculum. The second strategy involved contact programmes between pupils in Protestant and Catholic schools, and the third strategy consisted in developing integrated schools.

All three main strategic approaches have been supported by the government, through the measures contained in the Education Reform Order (ERO) (1989). ERO, which took effect in 1991, introduced a statutory common curriculum for all schools, which included two compulsory "cross-curricular themes" related to the issue of community relations: Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. Under these themes, schools have been encouraged, although not required, to be involved in contact programmes. These initiatives have been formalized and financed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) through the Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRP). Although there have been very good examples of good practice, research evidence suggests 'that the success of such cross-community contact schemes, and in particular the SCRP, is rather limited', due to 'the lack of a coherent definition of community relations and the often selective nature of the pupils participating in the programmes' (McEvoy, 2007, p.138). In turn, it has also been acknowledged by DENI that EMU was ineffective in managing issues concerning social justice and political education, probably due to overemphasising the nature of individual

prejudice, failing to acknowledge the political nature of the conflict and lacking any reference to human rights principles (Boyle, 1996; McEvoy and Lundy, 2006 – referenced in McEvoy, 2007). In order to improve on these initiatives and with an added reconciliation agenda, the Sharing Education Programme (SEP), managed by Queen's University, has been recently funded for three years 'to encourage schools to make cross-sectoral collaborations an integral part of school life, creating enhanced educational development opportunities for everyone involved' (QUB, 2011). Its first twelve school partnerships comprise nearly 60 schools and over 2,500 pupils. In addition, the Order included provisions to support the development of integrated education. This led to the Department funding the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), and the creation of mechanisms in legislation to transform existing schools to integrated status.

The role of integrated education in addressing community divisions in Northern Ireland has been the focus of a plethora of studies. That is despite the fact that such research faces considerable difficulties, as integrated schools are over-researched (constituting only a small number of schools), pupils are difficult to track down when conducting longitudinal research, and segregated schools are likely to be less keen in taking part in studies about integrated versus segregated education (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns & Hewstone, 2004). In general, research findings from these studies suggest a positive effect of integrated education on children and young people's sectarian attitudes (ibid, 2004), as well as long-term benefits on the adult population in promoting positive community relations (Hayes & McAllister, 2009).

In terms of the other governmental measures introduced by the 1989 Order, although these have had an impact in the rate of increase in the opening of new integrated schools, the growth of host organisations providing support for EMU work in schools, and the development of a considerable body of expertise, 'there remain some difficulties regarding the quality of the activity and its direct impact on community relations objectives' (Gallagher, 2004b, p. 128). Evaluations of these initiatives revealed that they often 'failed to address issues of division and conflict', by merely reproducing 'the degree of "polite" contact that existed in the wider society' (ibid, p.128). Furthermore, the implementation of cross-curricular themes was greatly varied, with potentially divisive issues being regularly avoided by teachers that did not feel

adequately trained for such work, and were already striving with an overloaded curriculum (Smith & Robinson, 1996, cited in McGlynn *et al.*, 2004).

A key consequence of the 1989 Order was the introduction of a common history curriculum. Prior 1989, schools had been free to choose what they taught in history lessons to children between 5-14 years old (which are compulsory for only this age group). After the introduction of a common curriculum, it was argued that 'a significant number of schools, if they could, avoided teaching about Northern Ireland's recent past altogether as it was felt to be too controversial a topic' (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010, p.25). In fact, at a primary level (through age 11), the curriculum evades political history altogether (Barton & McCully, 2010), by focusing on historic societies in Ireland and elsewhere, far removed in time or space, such as the Vikings, Mesolithic people, Ancient Egyptians, or people and their lives in uncontroversial contexts (e.g. in Victorian times or during World War II) (Barton, 2001a). The focus in these stages is on understanding 'what life was like at the time, rather than on studying how the events of a given period led to the structure of contemporary society' (Barton, 2001b, p.99). National political history is taught in the first three years of secondary/grammar school, between the ages of 11 and 14, featuring a core module, each year, focusing on a particular period: the Normans on the mediaeval world; the English conquest and colonization of Ireland in the 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries; and the growth of Irish nationalism and unionism from the Act of Union to Partition, within the context of European nationalist movements and World War I (Barton & McCully, 2005). Thus, 'the required curriculum in Northern Ireland ends with partition in 1921; unless students elect to study history at a higher level, they will have no exposure to most of the events of the past 80 years, and therefore connections between past and present will necessarily remain indirect' (Barton & McCully, 2006, pp. 9-10). That is not exceptional in deeply divided societies coming out of violent conflicts, as reforming the curriculum can be a contentious matter, and historical narratives are often closely attached to each separate community's identity and sense of victimisation (Cole & Barsalou, 2006). For instance, in other countries, such as Guatemala, 'attempts to reform history teaching focus on introducing new curricula on civics or citizenship instead of revising history education' (Cole & Barsalou, 2006, p.2); while, in extreme cases like Rwanda, in early 1995, the government decided to ban the teaching of history in the classrooms altogether (Brewer & Hayes, 2011b), as before the genocide, history teaching was divisive and children were taught to dislike other groups. However, in 2010, history

teaching recommenced in Rwandan schools with the help of only a teacher's guide and no student textbooks. Despite that, 'there appear to be tensions between a commitment to introduce more democratic, student-centred teaching methods in schools (which would permit debate of multiple versions of the past) and the Government's attempt to impose a singular "official" narrative of Rwanda's history' (McLean Hilker, 2010, p.2). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, three parallel curricula emerged during and after the conflict, each one teaching the heritage and ideology of exclusively one of the country's three communities, i.e. Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs (Dupuy & Peters, 2010); and in Lebanon, following the end of the war in 1990, a committee entrusted with writing a national history curriculum (including a shared story of the civil war) failed to deliver one that was accepted by all parties, consequently, history is now taught on the basis of the 1971 pre-civil war curriculum, which 'lacks any reference to events that are key to understanding present-day Lebanon' (van Ommering, 2011, p. 547). However, research has suggested that many young people are interested in being taught in school controversial and sensitive topics, such as the Troubles (Conway, 2004; Bell *et al.*, 2010):

"*I don't really want to learn about the old Irish stuff like the O'Neills. I would rather learn about the Troubles personally. I would rather learn about all the stuff that happened here rather than all the politics and all, it's really boring, but when you learn about actual stuff that happened in Belfast and Lurgan, bombs, it's interesting"* (Female, Catholic, 15-16, Lurgan, cited in Bell *et al.*, 2010, p.51).

In a study of a selection of history textbooks produced to meet the aims of the common curriculum, Kitson (2007, p.149) found that 'they tend to stop short of asking more challenging questions' or to address more sensitive aspects of the past, and it is very much left to the individual history teachers (McCully, 2010). Similarly, in a study on the portrayal of the 1916 Easter Rising in history textbooks in Northern Ireland, it was found that 'history textbooks do not link the mentioned historical incidents to the present' (Schulz, 2011, p.25). Kitson (2007) concluded that despite having a common curriculum, the history that was taught in each of the participating schools was distinctive and unique, in terms of the differing teachers' level of readiness to explore past-present connections and different historical perspectives with their pupils. In other studies, children and young people have talked about teachers actively avoiding talking about the Troubles in class (Magill *et al.*, 2009). Thus, in violently divided societies, this

raises questions for teachers, such as: 'What challenges do teachers face in the classroom when addressing controversial historical subjects, and what are some of the different approaches they use? How can teachers be trained or prepared to address these subjects, and how can they be supported and protected in environments where disagreements over history might give rise to violence? (Cole & Barsalou, 2006, p.3).

Barton and McCully (2003) highlight two crucial issues that are not explicitly addressed in the history curriculum in Northern Ireland. Firstly, there is no attempt to bring students to formulate their own identities in historical terms; and secondly, connections between historical events and contemporary issues are not pointed out. Thus, students are not presented with an alternative common official narrative aiming to justify the present situation or explain current concerns, but with a different way of approaching history, i.e. a "rationalistic approach" involving a distanced, analytical perspective that balances conflicting, competing viewpoints (Barton & McCully, 2010). Consequently, children might be learning one kind of history at school, while simultaneously learning a completely separate form of historical knowledge associated with sectarian memories and political conflict from other sources, such as parents and other relatives, or even murals or marches (Barton & McCully, 2003).

It has been recognised that 'the teaching of history is of particular significance in contested societies and stands out as an area of the curriculum particularly open to charges of bias and prejudice' (Smith & Vaux, 2003, p.31). However, McCully (2010) argues that 'the outcome of reform of history education in post-conflict environments is, to date, light on empirical study' (p. 171). Although some research has already been conducted on young people's perceptions on history education in Northern Ireland (i.e. Barton, 2001a,b; Barton & McCully, 2005, 2010; Bell *et al.*, 2010), more research is needed to explore the role of schools and the national curriculum in the formation of children's understanding of their local past, as it is crucial for the younger generations to understand their past to help them build a "peaceful" future. This research does highlight the influence of the school curriculum on the formation of children's understandings of their recent local past (see Chapter 4, Section 4), although further research should explore it in more detail. Next section looks at the influence of the conflict on children's national identity and attitudes towards the "other" community, as well as the role of parents and families in the transmission of sectarian attitudes and understandings of the conflict.

## 7. CHILDREN'S SECTARIAN IDENTITY AND ATTITUDES

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) has been used widely as a theoretical framework in early studies that attempted to make sense of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Trew, 2004). These studies focused on children's awareness and use of social categories, the development of their social identity, and tendencies to discriminate against out-groups and favour their own group. Mainly conducted by developmental psychologists during the seventies and eighties, and based on experimental designs (Jahoda & Harrison, 1975; Cairns, 1980; Cairns & Mercer, 1984), they were mainly concerned on answering the following questions:

*'at what age do children in Northern Ireland become aware that in their society there is the fundamental cleavage of all life into Catholic and Protestant? Perhaps more importantly at what age do they learn that they belong to one or other of these two groups and how important this group membership is?'* (Cairns, 1987, p.95)

These studies found that although children often showed some understanding of the denominational categories of Catholic and Protestant at the age of five or six, the majority of children were not able to categorise on a denominational basis until the age of ten or eleven (Cairns, 1987).

These studies have been criticised for using indirect and experimental methodologies, which failed to capture the perspectives of the children themselves (Connolly & Healy, 2004). Furthermore, they were largely descriptive, and underestimated the importance of context (Connolly & Maginn, 1999). Some later studies (Connolly & Maginn, 1999; Connolly & Healy, 2004) have employed methods that directly involve and engage children, but their focus has continued to be on how children's sectarian identities and attitudes develop with age. For instance, after reviewing the literature on children and prejudice, Connolly and Maginn (1999) concluded that children will start to develop some understanding of the labels "Catholic" and "Protestant" at a much earlier age than Cairns (1987) suggested, that is, at about the age of three, although 'such knowledge and understanding will develop with age as they expose themselves to an increasing array of social influences and contexts' (Connolly & Maginn, 1999, p. 37).

Despite this focus on psychological development, recently, some studies have highlighted the importance of the social context, rather than just age, in children's own

views. Connolly and Healy (2004) carried out a study between 2000 and 2002, with children aged 3-11 years living in four different areas of Belfast (two of them had experienced high levels of violence and two with very little experience of the violence), which aimed to explain the differing ways in which the conflict had influenced and shaped children's attitudes and identities. They found that children either tended to develop a partial and one-sided perception of aspects of the politics and history of Northern Ireland (that being particularly the case for children in the areas which experienced high levels of violence) and/or tended to be mostly unmindful to the key local historical and political events altogether (that being particularly the case for children in the areas with barely no experience of the Troubles).

A more recent study (Connolly, Muldoon & Kehoe, 2007) with children born in 1997 found that due to living in an extremely segregated society, children tended to 'develop a strong attachment with their own community (i.e. in-group preferences) and also negative attitudes towards the other community (i.e. out-group prejudices)' (p.36), although in this study in-group preferences were more prevalent than out-group prejudices. Muldoon, Trew, Todd *et al.* (2007) examined identity and the border and concluded that nationality was still an important feature of young people's and adults' identities, although there seemed to be opportunities for identity choice and identity change. Young people showed strong oppositional identification, in other words, a clear sense of what they were not rather than what they were. However, in 2009, the NI Young Life and Times Survey found that only 29% of the 16 year-olds that took part said that their national identity (i.e. British, Irish, etc) was important to them; and only 20% said that their religious identity (i.e. Catholic or Protestant) was (ARK, 2009).

However, as Trew (2004) argues, in Northern Ireland, 'the research agenda has been constrained by a narrow focus on intergroup processes. This may account for the absence of longitudinal studies or research that looks at the relationship between the views of children and their parents' (p.519). A considerable number of recent research studies have actually uncovered how relevant this relationship is, and suggest that parents and family are crucial actors in the process of socialization (e.g. Kelly, 2002). In these studies, children and young people have acknowledged their parents' influence on their own views. For instance, in a study of 1,732 children aged between 11-15 in Northern Ireland and 880 of their parents, it was found that parental attitudes explained over a third of the variance in children's group attitudes (Stringer, Irwing, Giles,

McCLenahan, Wilson & Hunter, 2010). Their results suggested that parents might be a strong influence on children's attitudes, as they have a direct role in the socialisation process and in selecting their child's school. This strong influence was also recognised by the 261 young participants of a recent study, aged 13-16 years old living along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Muldoon, McLaughlin & Trew, 2007). They were asked to write essays on the meaning of their national identity and the influence of parents and families on national and religious identity. It was found that most young people acknowledged the importance of parents in shaping their children's beliefs and opinions. Young people saw the transmission of negative values from generation to generation as inevitable, and seemed to believe that the transmission of positive values regarding their own group and the "other" group required a proactive stance on the part of parents.

Similarly, half of all 16 year-olds that took part in the Young Life and Times Survey reported that the most important influence on their views regarding the other main religious community was their family, followed by 19% that felt it was their friends, and 12% that believed it was their school (ARK, 2007). Smyth and others (2004) found that 60% of the young people they surveyed claimed that parents or other family members had taught them negative attitudes towards people from the "other" community. Kelly (2002) reported how in three Young National Children's Bureau talk-shops held in schools in Derry/Londonderry, young people (aged 16 and 17 years old) 'unanimously agreed that sectarian attitudes prevailed in Northern Ireland mainly because of the influence of parents who encouraged young people to develop sectarian attitudes' (p.68). Some explained how their parents had encouraged them to participate in local riots, showed them how to make petrol bombs, or had supported negative views of people from the "other" community. Smyth *et al.* (2004) reported that many of the young people they interviewed described how their parents had been crucial in introducing them to the Troubles, and providing them with an interpretation of the conflict: 'By telling children about their own past experiences and those of their community, parents ensure that their experiences are woven into the narratives available to the next generation'. Thus, as some young participants in McAlister *et al.*'s (2009) study point out, stories about the past are constantly passed down in families and communities, and these might feed sectarian attitudes among the younger generations and perpetuate conflict.

There is a need then to explore how children may interpret, select and appropriate the views and attitudes of their parents. This is further discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 2, particularly in its Section 4, which focuses on the idea of trans-generational transmission. Next section focuses on how children understand the concepts of peace and war/conflict, and what factors are influencing their views (e.g. age, gender, exposure to violence, etc.). International and local literature on these issues are examined.

## 8. CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDINGS OF WAR AND PEACE

In 2008, 36 armed conflicts were being fought in 26 locations throughout the world (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2009). In order to break this cycle, a full understanding is necessary of how children view war and peace, and how the transition between war and peace is handled between generations; especially in "post-conflict" societies (or societies "in transition") like Northern Ireland. This issue has been addressed by a considerable number of studies conducted in a variety of countries, which were or were not experiencing war or conflict at the time, such as: Israel (Spielmann, 1986); Australia (Hall, 1993); Northern Ireland (McLernon *et al.*, 1997); the Netherlands and Sweden (Hakvoort & Hägglund, 2001); Yugoslavia and the United States (Myers-Bowman, Walker, & Myers-Walls, 2005); and Brazil (de Souza, Sperb, McCarthy & Biaggio, 2006). Children's perceptions on war and peace have been gathered through various techniques, such as semi-structured interviews (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993; Myers-Bowman et al., 2005); open-ended questionnaires (McLernon & Cairns, 2006); drawings (Lewis & Osofsky, 1997; Walker, Myers-Bowman & Myers-Walls, 2003); and free compositions (Spielmann, 1986). These studies provide some evidence that children's understandings vary depending on intertwined factors, such as where the children live, the political situation of the time, their own experiences of violence, as well as individual characteristics such as age and gender.

Early studies in this field adopted a cognitive-developmental perspective. Consequently, age was found to be an important variable that influenced children's understandings of war and peace (Cooper, 1965; Alvik, 1968; Haavelsrud, 1970). These studies found that younger children tend to understand war in a "concrete" way, emphasising the instruments (e.g. weapons) and activities of war (e.g. fighting or killing), while older children are able to identify the more "abstract" aspects, such as the

negative consequences of war (e.g. people lying dead or injured) and its emotional impact (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998). According to a more recent study (Walker *et al.*, 2003), 'older children had a better understanding of the complexities of these concepts than did younger children' (p. 199). The debate whether the understanding of peace develops later than the understanding of war (Alvik, 1968; Cooper, 1965; Covell, Rose-Krasnor, & Fletcher, 1994; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993; Hakvoort, 1996; Walker *et al.*, 2003) or not (Hall, 1993) is based on these kinds of findings.

Other enquiries are concerned with gender differences (see Chapter 2). In some studies, girls were found to be able to define peace more precisely than boys (Hall, 1993; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998), while in another study (Hakvoort, 1996), boys understood peace earlier than girls. In earlier research, Cooper (1965) and Haavelsrud (1970) found that, when asked to define war, girls tended to refer more to objects of war and less to activities of war than boys. McLernon and Cairns (2001) found that more boys (96%) than girls (84%) depicted images of weapons and soldiers, and more girls (30%) than boys (24%) drew images of negative consequences of war.

Socio-political variables, such as the cultural context and children's level of exposure to violence, are also crucial. For instance, in a recent study on children's perceptions of the 2003 Iraq war, some North American children understood the war as a way to help people in Iraq, while none of the Northern Irish children in the sample shared this view (Blankemeyer, Walker, & Svitak, 2009). In situations of extreme political violence, like the Middle East, violence is a constant threat for children, who would never explain their own war 'as a mutual disagreement; instead, they perceive the conflict as an antagonistic "us and them" and as a question of life and death' (Punamäki, 1999, p. 138, cited by Gilligan, 2009). Some studies, where children have been asked to draw their neighbourhoods (Lewis, Osofsky, & Moore, 1994; Lewis & Osofsky, 1997; Farver, Ghosh, & Garcia, 2000; Rudenberg, Jansen, & Fridjhon, 2001; Usta & Farver, 2005), have clearly shown how children's level of exposure to violence has an impact on their own perceptions. For instance, in a study carried out in Beirut in 1997 (Usta & Farver, 2005), 75 out of 405 children aged 8-12 years drew violent incidents when asked to draw a picture of what was going on in their neighbourhood, and 168 talked about people fighting, hitting or beating in the streets, but chose not to draw them. In the USA, in a similar study, Farver and colleagues (2000) found that children living in high violence areas felt unsafe when playing outdoors and drew more violent incidents

(when asked to draw what was going on in their neighbourhoods), than did children living in low violence areas.

The political situation at the time of the research also appears to have an impact on children and young people's understandings of these concepts. In Northern Ireland, for instance, a study that compared the attitudes of young people to conflict and conflict resolution before and immediately after the 1994 ceasefires (McLernon *et al.*, 1997) suggested that at the time of the study, many young people had not fully accepted the reality of the peace process. A partial replication in 2002 (McLernon & Cairns, 2006), after significant political developments (e.g. 1998 Agreement, paramilitary disarmament, etc), showed only a minimal increase in the adolescents' concepts of peace expressed as respect for others, equality and tolerance. In fact, the number of adolescents who believed Northern Ireland was at peace fell from 44 per cent in 1994 to only 5 per cent in 2002.

Location is another key factor influencing how children make sense of these concepts. A study conducted just after the peace agreement in 1998 asked young Catholics aged between 13 and 18 years old in six schools in Northern Ireland (two in West Belfast; two in a town in Co.Down; and two in the Creggan area of Derry) how they imagined and defined community and peace (McEvoy, 2000). Peace was understood as secure environments, and coexistence and non-interference. It was found that in general, the West Belfast students were hopeful and perceived peace in positive terms, while the County Down students and particularly the male students in Derry, pessimistically declined to conceptualize peace at all.

Although research has been conducted on children's general understanding of war and peace in a variety of societies, little is known about children's understanding of the present and past of transitioning societies. To what extent do they perceive their local present and past as peaceful or/and violent? Moreover, these studies did not look either into how children's understandings are influenced by their specific social context, nor how they actively try to make sense of these concepts using their own and their peers' experiences and knowledge, while also drawing on their parents' views and experiences. However, the research reviewed here provides some evidence that children's understandings vary depending on intertwined factors such as where the children live, the political situation of the time, and their own experiences of violence.

## 9. SUMMARY

In societies coming out of violent intra-state conflicts, 'the transition from war to peace is neither unproblematic nor straightforward', as many new issues emerge in a post-conflict environment that directly affect individuals and communities, particularly children and young people (Dupuy & Peters, 2010, p. 104). The notion of "post-conflict" or "post-violent" (Brewer, 2010) society has recently attracted much attention within the social sciences, focusing on issues such as victimhood and the psychology of memory (Brewer & Hayes, 2011b). Perceived as one of these "post-conflict societies", Northern Ireland and its conflict and post-agreement phase has attracted a wide range of research, some of which has considered its effects on children and young people. This chapter has examined some of this literature, and identified some gaps.

As this chapter has revealed, the legacy of the "Troubles" is multiple, as it affects the social, economic and cultural spheres of the Northern Irish society. The different sections in the chapter have highlighted how children and young people in Northern Ireland were – and still are – affected by the conflict and its legacy in multiple ways, i.e. psychologically, socially (e.g. attitudes and social relationships), economically, and culturally (e.g. education system and schooling), and how these different contexts influence their own understandings of their nation's troubled past.

Some of the early studies on the legacy of the Troubles on children and young people were conducted from the dominant paradigm of developmental psychology, and they mainly focused in inter-group processes. Studies within this paradigm often used tests and experimental designs, while ignoring children's agency. However, recently, researchers have started considering children as active agents who can speak for themselves, which has meant that they are being more engaged and consulted in the research currently conducted, both locally and internationally (e.g. Leonard, McKnight & Spyrou, 2011). In addition to acknowledging children's agency, however, there is a need to examine children's lives within their social context, thus considering the communities within which they live, their families, school, etc (see Chapter 2). Thus, as argued earlier, how children and young people experience (or not) and understand the conflict in Northern Ireland depends on many factors, including where they live, their social and family background, as well as their peer relationships, or the school they go to. The concepts of children and childhood, and the notions of socialisation and trans-generational transmission are further explored in Chapter 2, which also deals with

gender theories, particularly the relationships between gender and children, as well as between gender and conflict.

# CHAPTER 2: THEORISING CHILDREN, CHILDHOOD AND GENDER

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical basis for this research. Children and childhood have been studied from a variety of perspectives and disciplines, such as developmental psychology, functionalist and post-modern sociology, history, anthropology and geography. In Section 2, the theories and paradigms informing the concept of children held here are explored. Although in this study, children are not portrayed as "blank pages" to which adults, particularly parents, inscribe their attitudes, views and memories, children do learn from significant adults and peers, and develop their own perspectives through a life-long learning process. As this study aims to find out whether and to what extent parents' experiences and attitudes influence children's own views, the concepts of socialisation and trans-generational transmission appear to be major notions in this research, and are appraised in Sections 3 and 4.

Available empirical evidence highlights the existence of gender differences in boys' and girls' behaviours, experiences and opinions. Section 5 examines theories focusing on the concept of gender and the reasons behind these differences in childhood. Since gender plays an important role in the process of growing up in societies coming out of years of political strife, the intersection between gender, children and conflict is considered in Section 6. A summary bringing together all these concepts is provided in the final section.

## 2. THEORIES OF CHILDHOOD

The conceptualisation that researchers hold of children and childhood will inform their choice of topic, methods, ethical practice, analysis, and interpretation of findings (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Mayall, 2000; O'Kane, 2000; Punch, 2002a). Therefore, in this section, theories of childhood that directly influenced the research are presented.

A crucial dichotomy in classical and contemporary social theory is agency versus structure. Agency refers to individuals' capacity to act independently and make their own choices, while structure refers to the material, cultural and institutional formations

that influence, constrain and limit the choices and opportunities of the individual. In general, most social theorists have favoured either one or the other side of this dichotomy. For instance, Marxism, structuralism and functionalism have prioritised structure over agency, and argued that individuals are determined by the overall structure of their society; while phenomenology, ethnomethodology and interactionism stressed individuals' agency to construct and re-construct their worlds.

In the case of the study of children, sociologists and psychologists have traditionally emphasised structure over agency, by focusing on the concepts of socialisation and child development. From these perspectives, children are then seen as "blank pages" that adults (especially parents) fill with the norms and structures of the society they inhabit. Thus, children are seen as mostly passive objects to be studied, being considered incomplete and incompetent (Mayall, 2000; Barker & Weller, 2003), in the process of "becoming" competent adults (Valentine, 1997). In contrast, in the mid 1980s, the "new sociology of childhood" (James & Prout, 1990) emerged. Eventually labelled the "new social studies of childhood" (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), as it expanded to other disciplines, e.g. geography (Holloway & Valentine, 2000) and anthropology (Montgomery, 2009), this new paradigm focuses on the child as a social agent. It recognises children's competence and agency, and aims to explore children's own explanations of their lives (Valentine, 1997). From this perspective, children do not merely acquire adults' ideas, but develop their own ways of knowing (Leonard, 2006c), meaning that children know things differently, instead of knowing less (Matthews *et al.*, 1998; Matthews & Limb, 1999). As Wyness (2006, p. 94) argues, 'children are acting with others, making and taking decisions, and demonstrating commitments and responsibilities'. They are able to make sense of and affect their societies. This new paradigm aims to study the "here and now" of children, thus highlighting the importance of capturing the immediacy of young people's lives (Matthews & Limb, 1999). In general, it appears that agency is given priority over structure. However, according to James *et al.* (1998), it is not as simple as that, and within the so-called "new social studies of childhood", a diversity of approaches and perspectives have been developed, with some emphasising structure, i.e. the *social constructionist* approach and the *social structural* approach and others emphasising agency, i.e. the *minority group child* approach and the *tribal child* approach.

From a social constructionist perspective, childhoods are variable and intentional, a universal child does not exist, but each child is different depending on their context, inhabiting a world of meaning created by themselves and through their interactions with adults. Social constructivists appear to emphasise structure, as they argue that the idea of childhood we hold is a historical culturally-specific construction. Similarly, the social structural approach also focuses on structure, as it understands children as a constant feature of all social worlds. However, while social constructivists recognise the existence of multiple realities of childhood (Valentine, 1997), those endorsing the social structural approach argue that children are, in fact, a universal category (e.g. Qvortrup, 1987). The *tribal child* approach, coming mostly from ethnography, focuses on the child's agency, and "others" the world of the child, by highlighting differences rather than similarities between the children's worlds and the adult world. Within this approach, we can find studies on children's language and games. The difference between this perspective and *the child as a minority group* approach is that while the former celebrates and recognises diversity, the latter (just like the social structural approach) considers children as a universal category, playing down gender and age differences. The *minority child* approach aims to give children's experiences a voice, and to challenge power relations between children and adults. Researchers (e.g. Alanen, 1992; Oakley, 1994) adopting this approach have conducted studies on children's serious illnesses and work.

In the study presented here, both sides of the structure vs. agency dichotomy are being reconciled. Children are seen as social agents that act within the confines of the structures they inhabit. Structures here not only refer to the norms, regulations and material/economic/cultural circumstances of the society/community they live in, but also the gender, social class, ethnic, and age groups they belong to. Thus, a diversity of childhoods is recognised here, and the idea of the universal child is rejected.

## 3. SOCIALISATION AND LEARNING

Within the discipline of sociology, the process of socialisation is widely understood as one of the principal ways by which societies generate themselves and where beliefs and values are transmitted from one generation to the next. Bauman (1990) argues that in the process of primary socialisation, children internalise elementary social skills and essential knowledge to become a group member of the society/community they

are growing up in, although the process of socialisation is not confined to childhood, and a secondary socialisation might be experienced whenever we change school, get a new job, become married, etc.

In the last few decades, the concept of "socialisation" has been heavily criticised and utterly rejected by a number of authors subscribing to the "new social studies of childhood" paradigm, as implying the idea that children are "incomplete" or "in the process" of becoming adults rather than full members of society and social actors in their own right (e.g. Matthews, 2007). However, as Jane Baxter (2005) argues, the idea of socialisation can be rethought in order to enable a better understanding of children within society. Instead of understanding the process of socialisation as a process of enculturation, it could be viewed as a dialogue between generations. Thus, 'cultural knowledge is not simply unilaterally transmitted but is shaped and negotiated through interactions between members of families and communities' (Baxter, 2005, p.24). In other words, children's socialisation does not involve passive mimicry (James *et al.*, 1998), since children never exactly reproduce the behaviours and attitudes shown and instructed by their elders (Baxter, 2005). This more dynamic conception views both adults and children as active participants in the socialisation process.

This perspective then appears closer to the "new social studies of childhood", from which children are considered to be not just the mere receivers of their parents' attitudes, understandings and knowledge, but they are believed to react to and interpret these sets of attitudes and understandings through their own lenses, which in turn will be coloured by their own particular experiences and memories of growing up in a certain area or community.

Thus, apart from parents, peer groups and children's friendships play an important role in how children interpret adults' understandings and attitudes, and how certain views are reproduced, challenged or modified. In fact, 'children's friendship networks help facilitate processes of cultural reproduction, for it is largely with their peers that children play, tell jokes and swap ideas' (James *et al.*, 1998, p. 95). In other words, peer groups 'allow children to test and compare the values they have gained at home, and to create alternatives to adult standards' (Baxter, 2005, p.33). Thus, children interpret the knowledge transmitted by their elders in ways they see appropriate for themselves and their generation.

From a behaviour analytical perspective (Skinner, 1971), culture is understood by everyday practices (both verbal and non-verbal) shared and passed on by a group of people, and transmission is considered the transfer of behaviour from one group member to another. A child, however, similar to what has just been argued, not only acquires cultural practices from their parents and a larger variety of adults (e.g. other relatives, teachers, neighbours or youth leaders), but also from their peers. Horizontal transmission occurs then within same generations, and the concept implies that cultural transmission not only occurs within childhood but throughout people's lives, allowing new traits to displace old ones (Baum, 2005). This life-lasting process builds one's personal learning history, which shapes one's constantly-evolving private and public behavioural repertoires. In other words, people acquire new repertoires and abandon old ones throughout their lives (e.g. many baby's behaviours change once a child start school) (Dillenburger, 2008).

## 4. TRANS-GENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA

Smyth (1998) argues that in Northern Ireland, the Troubles have created a sense of grievance felt by many, which is often based on real wrongs and injustice, and that 'children growing up in such climate inherit these grievances' (p. 26). This could mean that 'whether intentionally or not, the effects of the violent experiences of this generation of adults can be passed on to subsequent generations' (pp. 26-27). Similarly, some international research suggests that memories of past conflict and experiences of violence are seldom forgotten, and this memory can be transmitted from one generation to another that did not directly experience it, thus developing the potential for future conflict (Volkan, 1996). Most often thought of as vertically descending from parent to child, trans-generational transmission can occur in an ascending order from child to parent (Simpson, 1998), although this phenomenon has been less explored.

Thus, the degree to which trans-generational processes take place or whether there is an associated effect with exposure to trauma is worthy of investigation; particularly when recent research exploring the effectiveness of services for victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (Dillenburger *et al.*, 2007) showed how many of those interviewed displayed signs of poor psychological health, frequently talking about nightmares,

anxiety, fear, flashbacks and suicidal thoughts up to 30 years after the event/s. That research also found that many participants felt they could not talk to their family members about the traumatic event for fear of causing distress. Often, the event/s were not spoken about within the family for years. Silence is purported to be a central mechanism in passing trauma from one generation to the next (Gilligan, 1997). Burrows and Keenan (2004) claimed that '[u]nresolved and intergenerational trauma can freeze people and groups in the past, and make transformation to more just, equal and peaceful society less possible' (p. 121). In a review of current understanding of trans-generational processes within the field of family therapy, Weingarten (2004) asserts that understanding the mechanisms by which children may be exposed to legacies of political violence can help us make connections between current distress and political issues that may be the basis of resolving presenting problems.

The theory of trans-generational transmission of trauma emerged from research conducted within the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry through studies of Holocaust survivors and their children and grandchildren. According to these numerous studies (over 400 papers published in three decades; see Kellermann, 2001), the psychological problems of Holocaust survivors might be passed on to their offspring, despite a lack of robust empirical evidence fully confirming this assumption (see Kellermann, 2000). It is thus suggested that survivors of war can project their fear and anger onto their children, and transmit their mental health problems (acquired as a direct result of their experiences of violent conflict) onto subsequent generations that have not been directly affected (e.g. Daud, Skoglund & Rydelius., 2005; Fonagy, 1999; Srour, 2005). For instance, in Northern Ireland, it was found that the second generation of Bloody Sunday families was experiencing clinical distress (e.g. nightmares, anxiety, etc) associated with Bloody Sunday (i.e. a well-known event of the Troubles that took place in Derry/Londonderry in 1972, when the British Army shot dead 14 unarmed national civilians during a civil rights demonstration) (Shevlin & McGuigan, 2003; McGuigan & Shevlin, 2010).

According to Kellermann (2001), different theoretical approaches have attempted to explain the process of trans-generational transmission of (Holocaust) trauma:
1) psycho-dynamic and relational models of transmission (i.e. the child unconsciously absorbs the repressed experiences of the survivor parent);

2) socio-cultural/social learning and socialisation models of transmission (i.e. the child forms their own impressions through their survivor parent's child-rearing behaviours, such as prohibitions, taboos and fears);
3) family systems and communication models of transmission (i.e. the child comes into contact only with their own survivor parents and close families, and child and parents both try to shield the other from painful experiences);
4) biological or genetic models of transmission (i.e. the child of survivors is passed on the traumatisation of their parents, through a genetic or bio-chemical predisposition, almost as if "psychological DNA" was planted in their personality); and
5) an integrative view of trauma transmission, which Kellermann (2001) advocates for (i.e. each specific symptom of a child of survivors is caused by a multitude of influences integrated in the different above-mentioned models of transmission; and there are also different mitigating and aggravating factors).

From a behaviour analytical perspective, the concept of trans-generational transmission of trauma can be understood as mainly the transmission of victim behaviour from one generation to the next (Dillenburger, 2008). Across generations, this kind of behaviour is mostly transmitted through stories, and thus verbally determined, which means that as a result, the behavioural repertoire of the second generation is never going to be the same as that of the first (Dillenburger, 2008). In fact, as Maurice Halbwachs (1992) explained in the 1950s, *historical/collective memory*, which is transmitted, shared, passed on and also constructed by the social group, is never as rich and personally meaningful as *autobiographical memory*, which is actually first-hand experienced (cited in Dillenburger, 2008). Despite that, stories of personal memories become a key component of a "collective memory", through which a shared group identity is created (Dawson, 2007). As Devine-Wright (2003) argues, Halbwachs' theoretical perspective differs from the orthodox psychological approach, as it shifts the attention from the individual to both the individual and the social group, recognising that memory is socially constructed and reconstructed over time. In light of this, complex links between processes of remembering and issues of ethnic/political conflict have been uncovered by a wide range of different perspectives and disciplines across the social sciences. These reflect how collective/social memories can be manipulated and distorted for group purposes, as they can be used to legitimise or de-legitimise collective actions and institutions, often helping cement divisions between

groups (Devine-Wright, 2003) and develop negative attitudes towards others, but also maintain and reproduce social identities (Roe & Cairns, 2003).

As it has been argued, collective memories are often created, circulated and shared through the stories about the past told within families (Dawson, 2007); but what stories are told? How are they told? To what extent are they listened to, understood, forgotten, remembered, accepted, rejected, and/or transformed? Chapter 6 attempts to answer these questions, whereas the next section introduces the concept of "gender".

## 5. CHILDREN AND GENDER

In a study looking at Irish children's descriptions of their own lives, their selves and the country they inhabit, boys' and girls' accounts differed (O'Connor, 2007). For instance, boys tended to refer to football at some level (e.g. football stars or themselves playing), as well as technological artefacts, houses, local spots and historical buildings, and occasionally national symbols like flags or the shamrock; while girls' accounts were more related to nature, their families and friends, as well as pop culture and houses. Boys and girls also differed on how they spent their leisure time in a recent USA study, where boys spent most of their time playing sports, watching television and playing computer games, whereas girls spent most of their time watching TV (Cherney & London, 2006). In Northern Ireland, young boys and girls were also found to differ in terms of the importance they attributed to ethnic markers (i.e. soccer shirts, flags and sports), with these appealing more to boys than to girls (Connolly, 2011); and differences were also found in terms of national identity, with boys showing a higher degree of national identity than girls, and Catholic boys evaluating the "traditional enemy" (i.e. British) less positively than Catholic girls (Gallagher & Cairns, 2011). These are just some examples of research that has been conducted where differences between boys' and girls' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences have been highlighted.

Different theories (e.g. psychoanalytic, social structural, social learning theory, etc) have provided frameworks for investigating gender differences, addressing the issue of how and why male and female human beings might come to be different, and thus why differences are found in research studies like the ones mentioned above. While psychoanalytic theories emphasise the development of individual personalities and

early parent-child relationships, other theories focusing on social structure and culture emphasise the role that social structures/arrangements have on the preservation of gender roles and stereotypes (Lips, 2005). Thus, the question becomes: 'Are female-male differences part of our human inheritance, or do we learn to be feminine and masculine by interacting with the environment?' (Lips, 2005, p.119). However, many authors have concluded that neither nature nor nurture is able to explain by itself the development of particular human behaviours, and that a complex relationship exists between heredity and environmental factors (Lips, 2005). Gender differences seem to appear only in some contexts, suggesting that many behavioural differences between women/girls and men/boys are not set by biology or early learning, but a product of lifelong learning to adapt to presenting circumstances (Lips, 2005). Thus, any expression of masculinity or femininity only makes sense within the specific context in which it takes place. For instance, schools might reinforce certain forms of masculinity among the boys and certain forms of femininity among the girls (Connolly, 2006).

Although there has been some research showing the relevance of gender in relation to children's family relationships and friendships, children's use of public spaces and recreational activities, and their own views of gender differences (Morrow, 2006), there has been 'little systematic research on how children learn gender, how they understand it and negotiate it on a daily basis, even though this sort of study is well established in the study of adult women' (Montgomery, 2005). Morrow (2006) argues that greater attention should be paid to gender issues in the study of children's everyday lives, while recognising that gender differences intersect with ethnicity, social class, age, religion and location 'to influence children's childhoods and their gender identities' (p.92).

### 5.1. What is gender?

Gender is a complex concept that has been defined and re-defined from a wide range of perspectives. It has been used since the early 1970s to refer to socially constructed femininity and masculinity as opposed to biological sex traits, with Ann Oakley (1972) being one of the first to make this distinction (Jackson, 1998). Since then, different ways of theorising "gender" have emerged. However, the idea that differences between women and men are not just determined by biology had been around for longer; an example being Simone de Beauvoir, writing in the 1940s, 'one is not a woman, but becomes one' (Jackson, 1998). Regarding sexual difference, feminist theorists from a

variety of disciplines have traditionally taken three disparate approaches: one being to deny the essentialist nature of differences between women/girls and men/boys; another being to celebrate difference and embrace characteristics historically associated with women and femininity; and finally, a third approach being to challenge the centrality of difference and to alter the terms on which gender relations have been traditionally debated (Rhode, 1990).

An early classification of gender theories was developed by West and Zimmerman (1987), who distinguished between: 1) a “sex differences approach”; 2) “gender roles” theory; 3) gender as “display”; and 4) their own perspective on “doing gender”. The sex difference approach, commonly attributed to psychologists rather than sociologists, reduces gender to a set of psychological traits or a unitary variable. In contrast, role theory has been applied to gender, in terms of focusing on how “gender roles” are learned and enacted. The problem found with this theoretical approach is that roles are situated rather than master identities, thus this theory does not actually explore the influence of gender on other roles, such as “nurse” or “doctor” (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The dramaturgical approach of Goffman (1976) understands gender as display, as a socially scripted drama in which we play either a femininity or a masculinity part in scheduled performances in special locations. It follows from social interactionism emerging from Mead’s (1934) work, and is linked to Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodological approaches to gender as a performance (Holmes, 2007). According to Goffman, the overall pattern of gender displays tends to reinforce what is perceived as a “natural” hierarchy where men are dominant and women are subordinate, although gender is not “natural” but an illusion created in social interactions. The problem that West and Zimmerman (1987) find with this perspective is that it fails to consider gender as central to all every-day social interactions, only performed in certain situations, and at the periphery of interactions. Instead, they propose a view of gender as a fundamental ingredient of all social everyday interactions, as something that one repeatedly “does”, and works at, in interaction with others. Thus, they understand “doing gender” as unavoidable, as long as a ‘society is partitioned by “essential” differences between women and men and placement in a sex category is both relevant and enforced’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.137). For them, gender displays are not optional, as everybody is constantly working at presenting themselves as either feminine or masculine in relation to others.

The vision of gender shared by West and Zimmerman has been criticised in terms of being too "voluntaristic" by post-modern theorists like Judith Butler (1990), best known for her contribution to queer theory in the early 1990s, who argues that people cannot choose how to do gender in the same way as they pick what clothes to wear in the morning (Holmes, 2009). According to Butler, gender is not something that people do, but a social construction that creates the reality in which people live their lives. Gender and sex are both constructed through discursive and non-discursive practices. Butler (1999) understands the gendered body not as performed but as performative. The same repeated acts, attitudes, and gestures, and the reiteration of a set of gender norms construct it. Butler takes drag as an example of gender parody, which shows that there is no original identity to imitate. There is no inner truth of gender, no pre-existing identity. The performance implies the materialisation of the "subject", the performer, constituted as an "effect". In order to consider someone as a human being, this person needs to be attributed a gender. However, her theory does not necessarily imply determinism, but leaves place for agency: that the subject is *constituted* does not automatically mean that she or he is *determined*. Butler proposes that within modifications in the repetition of gender acts and norms, we can find agency and sometimes, even, subversion.

Holmes (2007) takes into account these theories to formulate her own perspective, reconciling Goffman's and Butler's standpoints. She understands gender as something that we do, but also as something done to us. While recognising that gender/sex binaries create us as subjects, she also wants to retain the idea of an actor/subject who, once brought into being by gender, engages with it. In other words, gender is 'a social structural phenomenon but is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction' (Jackson & Scott, 2002, p.1). Holmes (2007) also emphasises the idea of gender as a social construction, something that has been "made up", and as such, it can be remade (although not easily or without trouble), because it is not "fixed", but subject to change.

### 5.2. Learning gender

As Mary Holmes (2009) argues, 'a major part of socialization is about learning how to do gender' (p. 36), and this learning process starts as soon as one is born and people treat them differently and expect different things from them depending on whether one is a boy or a girl. In other words, children learn from an early age through modelling,

reinforcement and explicit instruction that gender categories are important, thus certain activities, clothes and toys are only appropriate for girls or only for boys (e.g. “boys don’t play with dolls”) (Lips, 2005). For instance, Barrie Thorne’s (1993) study of children in USA primary schools illustrated how children actively create gender identities through their interactions with their peers, and how their gender performances are constantly open to evaluation, as peers monitor and patrol gender-appropriate behaviours (Morrow, 2006). Similarly, Connolly (1998) observed how children bring to school very clear ideas about what girls and boys should and should not do (Morrow, 2006).

However, as Holmes (2009) points out, the lessons that are taught during the life-long socialisation process are not as clear as it is often assumed, but children have to choose between numerous contradictory messages about gender, since ‘the meanings of gender are not unitary but multiple, and sometimes contradictory’ (Thorne, 1990, p. 110), even within the same social institution. For instance, in one school, different teachers might display different patterns of masculinity and femininity, giving different messages to their pupils, or in one household, parents might have different ideas on how to bring up a girl or a boy (Connell, 2002). Although some “conventional” meanings are difficult to oppose, children engage not only with dominant but also with alternative and even subversive messages about gender, transmitted through cultural products (e.g. toys or clothes) and social institutions (e.g. family, the media and school) (Holmes, 2007). To sum up, social expectations on what is appropriate feminine or masculine behaviour can be ambiguous, and even when they are obvious, not all girls and boys follow them in the same way (Holmes, 2007), some even resisting or actively rejecting them.

Therefore, defining gender in terms of difference is problematic as: it ‘means that where we cannot see difference, we cannot see gender’; and it ‘excludes the patterns of difference among women, and among men’ (Connell, 2002, pp. 8-9). In other words, it ‘exaggerates gender difference and neglects within-gender variation, including crosscutting sources of division and commonality like social class and ethnicity’ (Thorne, 2002, p. 293). The idea of bipolar maleness/femaleness works by reducing the actual diversity of children’s behaviour to a bipolar model, which often involves either ignoring or not seeing “deviations” or actually managing to interpret certain behaviours as bipolar even when they might be non-polar (Davies, 2002). Exploring the

dynamics of children's social contexts and their social relations prevents the simple equation of gender with dichotomous difference, and thus facilitates the recognition that the categories boy and girl have multiple and changing meanings (Thorne, 1990). As Connell (2002) argues, there is not just one feminine or masculine repertoire, but there are multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity in any given society, which partly result from class and ethnic differences.

In sum, although children learn to do gender through their families and peers, the gendered messages and behavioural repertoires they constantly interpret, resist, ignore, adapt and/or acquire differ among different boys and among different girls, depending on a variety of factors, such as social class, ethnicity, age, etc. Thus, this research study aims to be attuned to both the variations/similarities between girls' and boys' perspectives, but also the variations/similarities among different girls' perspectives, and among different boys' perspectives.

## 6. GENDER AND CONFLICT

The association in wars and conflicts of children with "women-as-mothers" is often 'used to feminize and neglect the diverse ways of agency and myriad possible roles within both those included in the category of women and those within "children"' (Kynsilehto, 2007, p. 364; see also Brocklehurst, 2006). In fact, the category of "children" has often been compared to that of "women", since both are considered subordinate groups, and thus, some theories of childhood have actually inherited and adapted key conceptual traits of feminism (Wyness, 2006). The intersection between the concepts of gender, children and violence/conflict (particularly, ethnic/political conflict) will be explored in this section.

Traditionally, women (and girls) have been associated with "nurture", and thus peace, while aggressiveness and violence has been regarded as inherently male, and thus the domain of men (and boys). Within this perspective, there are two main positions: those considering these differences as natural/biological; and those viewing them as the result of patriarchal structures. Both positions represent an essentialist view of men (and boys) and women (and girls), as well as of masculinity and femininity (Byrne, 1996). The image of conflict as naturally male overlooks, minimises and disregards significant similarities between women (and girls) and men (and boys) and differences

within groups (i.e. between females/males of different classes, ages or ethnicities) in terms of their war experiences (Johnson & Newcomb, 1992); and conceals the different ways in which women (and girls) are affected by, and involved in, conflict (Byrne, 1996). For instance, a tension exists between the image of women and girls as peace-loving and the evidence of women's and girls' aggression and violence (Johnson & Newcomb, 1992), as well as their sometimes public role in supporting war and political violence (Muldoon, McLaughlin, Rougier and Trew, 2008). Thus, the next sub-section explores how women (and girls), as well as children and young people (both male and female), have a variety of experiences of conflict and violence, both as active participants as well as direct and indirect sufferers.

### 6.1. Gender, children and experiences of conflict and violence

As already pointed out, boys and masculinities are traditionally associated with aggressiveness and violence, in contrast with girls, who tend to be thought of as quiet and peaceful. In Northern Ireland, masculinity and violence are actually particularly interlinked, as (especially paramilitary and sectarian) violence has been a vital part of both the masculine and national identity of many young men in working class communities. In fact, young working-class men in Northern Ireland have been found to develop a form of masculinity, in which violence (in terms of a personal capacity for and a tacit acceptance of) is virtually compulsory, regardless of religious affiliation or ethnicity (Reilly, Muldoon & Byrne, 2004). For instance, the findings from a recent qualitative study of 130 young men (aged 13 to 16) revealed that 'violence and paramilitary influence continue to perpetuate a male youth subculture epitomized by sectarianism and increasing racist attitudes. Underpinning this is an enduring cycle of suspicion, fear, and distrust of others and a confused state of mind that leaves these young men "stuck" somewhere between the ceasefire mentality of paramilitaries and the ambiguous messages of peacebuilding' (Harland, 2011, p.414). Similarly, McAlister *et al.* (2009), in their also recent study in deprived and highly Troubles-affected communities, found that violence was *most often* associated with young men, as it was closely related to their masculine identity and was a means of showing toughness, securing protection, and gaining status. Furthermore, as already argued in Chapter 1, it appears to be that mostly teenage boys rather than girls are engaging in different forms of violence and "anti-social behaviour" (e.g. McAllister *et al.*, 2009) or what has been coined as "recreational rioting" (Jarman & O'Halloran, 2001).

However, in the last few years, despite statistics pointing to a different reality, a tendency has been growing of labelling girls (especially adolescent girls) as violent (as "bad girls" or girls "in trouble"), particularly in the USA (Miller & White, 2004), but also in the UK. In the UK, although violence perpetrated by girls represents just a tiny portion compared to that committed by boys, it has been argued that violence by young women has increased (Rutter *et al.*, 1998; cited by Worrall, 2004, p. 42). In fact, there has been an increase in violent crime committed by young people, boys and girls, but the gender ratio remained similar to that found during the 1990s with around one girl to five boys (Rutter *et al.*, 1998; cited in Worrall, 2004, p. 47). In addition, a recent review of reports and statistics has not substantiated the perception of an increase of violent crime and street gang membership among young women (Young, 2009).

In the UK, although a search on "girls and violence" in the BBC news website returns a list of news related to girls being victims of violence (particularly sexual violence and domestic violence), we can increasingly find news where girls are the perpetrators of violence, e.g. as gang members and as drunk and "disorderly" girls in the cities or bullies in the classroom. Such stories have been a frequent theme of the British media since the 1990s (Burman & Batchelor, 2009). Headlines coming out in the last few years are increasingly contributing to the creation of a so-called "moral panic" about violent girls: 'Girls' behaviour in class is "deteriorating"' (18th April 2011); 'Girls' violent attack on two boys' (20th May 2009); 'Are our girls getting more violent?' (15th May 2008); 'Why are girls fighting like boys?' (5th May 2008); 'Girls "becoming more violent"' (22nd November 2005). This type of reporting and media coverage of female teenage violence leads to the social construction of some girls as no longer "at risk" and of needing protection, but as "in moral danger", as threats to the moral fabric of society (Worrall, 2004). Thus, girls' behaviours that do not fit into the socially accepted youth femininities of educational attainment and/or domestic passivity are seen in terms of "crime", especially in terms of "disorder" and "violence", rather than "emotional neediness"; these girls are then defined as a "threat", as being violent, in fact as being like boys (Alder & Worrall, 2004). This view has severe implications for girls, especially those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they are being dealt with by the criminal justice system, when they offend, rather than by welfare systems (Worrall, 2004). In fact, when being dealt in the courts, girls have reported being discriminated due to their gender:

*"In court—the Judge says 'You're the only wee girl causing so much trouble' and he gave me an ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order)" [for behaviour that would probably not have received such a response if carried out by a young man]* (Young woman cited in Haydon, 2008, p.421)

In terms of victimisation, girls and boys have different experiences of conflict. In general, gender appears to be related to exposure to traumatic/violent events in war-torn countries or societies coming out of violent conflicts, with boys reporting having experienced more conflict-related violence than girls (e.g. Dubow, Boxer, Huesmann, *et al.*, 2010; Macksoud & Aber, 1996). Northern Ireland is not an exception, as the majority of those killed and injured in the conflict were young males, and a considerably larger proportion of young men and boys have reported a higher degree of exposure to conflict-related incidents than young women and girls have (e.g. Muldoon & Trew, 2000). Thus, it is not surprising that boys and girls living in interface areas in Belfast have also been found to differ in their use of space and spatial mobility, with girls tending to be more spatially mobile than boys, as places of risk like the city centre were more often avoided by boys rather than girls (Leonard, 2007).

However, despite international recognition of the importance of understanding the impact of conflict on the lives of girls and women and local recognition of gender differences in terms of their violent experiences and perceptions, it has been argued that there is little understanding and recognition of how the Northern Irish Troubles have affected women, particularly young women and girls, as gender inequalities have exacerbated their "invisibility" (Gray & Neill, 2011). The limited existing research evidence suggests that they too have been deeply affected by the entrenched segregation, prejudice and violence (as a real or perceived threat) existent before and after the peace process started, which has restricted opportunities and choices in their lives (ibid).

As well as having different experiences of conflict and violence, boys and girls appear to have different understandings of what the notions of peace and war mean, as discussed in the following sub-section.

### 6.2. Gender, children and understandings of conflict

Worldwide, boys and girls have been found to differ in their understanding of the concepts of peace and war (see Chapter 1, Section 8). For instance, girls have been found to be able to define peace more precisely than boys (Hall, 1993; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998), although in one study (Hakvoort, 1996), boys appeared to understand peace earlier than girls. In earlier research, Cooper (1965) and Haavelsrud (1970) found that, when asked to define war, girls tended to refer more to objects of war and less to activities of war than boys. McLernon and Cairns (2001) found that when asked to draw pictures of war, more boys (96%) than girls (84%) depicted images of weapons and soldiers, and more girls (30%) than boys (24%) drew images of negative consequences of war.

In a study of Croatian children's attitudes towards war, statistically significant gender differences were found, whereby boys tended to justify their nation's fight more readily than girls and showed more personal loyalty and sense of duty in wartime (Jagodic, 2000). That might be explained by the fact that military training in Croatia was given exclusively to men (ibid).

In Beirut, when children (N=405) were asked to draw their neighbourhoods and what was going on there, all violent incidents including a weapon were drawn by boys, and involved men as both victims and perpetrators, while girls drew more positive elements, such as children playing, trees or flowers, than boys did (Usta & Farver, 2005). However, in a study examining children's perceptions of neighbourhood violence and safety in the USA, no significant gender differences were found in terms of how much violence was depicted in their pictures of what was going on in their neighbourhood (Farver *et al*., 2000).

In terms of young people's perceptions of incidents of political violence, girls and boys in Northern Ireland have been found to differ, but only in the perception of certain events, i.e. those perceived as least stressful overall and related to political events (e.g. getting caught up in a riot or getting stopped in a checkpoint) rather than those impacting on family life (e.g. a family member seriously injured), with girls rating them more negatively than boys (Muldoon *et al.*, 2009). These findings were found to be consistent with Brody, Lovas and Hay's (1995) explanation that events associated with

stereotypically male behaviours are considered as more threatening by girls than by boys (Muldoon *et al.*, 2009).

## 7. SUMMARY

The theoretical approaches on children and gender are filled with oppositional dichotomies: boys vs. girls; feminine vs. masculine; active vs. passive; structure vs. agency; nature vs. nurture; peace vs. aggression/violence/war; etc. These dualistic debates have been addressed in this chapter, and on many occasions, both sides of the dichotomy have been reconciled, or the dichotomy has been discarded as not appropriate or helpful.

Children actively develop, negotiate, and reproduce their own gender, ethnic and multiple identities (Connolly, 2006) by adopting particular behavioural repertoires, although always within the constraints of the circumstances they find themselves growing up in. They learn from their parents and other significant adults, but also from their peers; all of who are crucial influences in their daily lives. Boys and girls often experience conflict and wars within their countries in different ways, but are often seen as either victims needing protection and/or therapy/treatment (especially girls) or as violent perpetrators and a "threat" to society (especially boys, but also increasingly some girls failing to accomplish the standard youth femininities of academic achievement and/or domestic obedience). However, boys and girls are exposed to a variety of different experiences and interpret/view the concepts of war and peace in a variety of ways, not only depending on their gender, but also on other variables, such as ethnicity, age or social class.

In any society coming out of violent strife, the past is often seen as particularly problematic and intractable (Dawson, 2007), but for a successful transition to peace to take place, 'the past has to be dealt with in one way or another' (Hamber, 1998, p.2; cited in Dawson, 2007), as the role of the collective past in the collective present needs to be properly addressed. 'This role is communicated via memories of the past, collective memories' (Cairns & Roe, 2003, p. 5), which are often constructed and transmitted through personal stories about the past told by one generation to the next. The mechanisms by which trans-generational transmission takes place or not, and the

ways young generations receive and interpret these stories and memories should be comprehensively investigated.

This research draws then on a variety of theoretical backgrounds and previous literature on children, socialisation/trans-generational transmission, gender, and intra-state conflicts, which has been explored in this chapter and in Chapter 1. Connections to this literature will be made when presenting the findings and drawing conclusions. The next chapter focuses on the methodology employed to conduct this study, and reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of the techniques used and the limitations of the study.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes how the study was carried out. The methods used (including the analysis of data, and sample characteristics) to achieve the aims detailed in the Introduction are stated, but also the advantages and disadvantages of the particular techniques employed are explored. Relevant ethical issues (i.e. access and consent, risks and benefits to participants, and privacy and confidentiality) are considered, and limitations of the study are identified. Furthermore, in the next section, the search strategy used to conduct the literature review, which enabled to establish the background of the research in the first two chapters and to contextualise the findings in the final chapters, is described. The following chapters will look at the findings emanating from the methods and techniques used.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH STRATEGY

Various search engines and online databases were used to inform the literature review. These were: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), which is part of the Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA) service; PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO (from the American Psychological Association); the Social Science Citation Index (part of the Web of Science service); and Google Scholar. Key words searched were: children, drawings, war, peace, conflict, post-conflict, trans-generational transmission, parents, sectarianism, history teaching, Troubles, and school. In addition to searching for literature through these particular search engines, further literature references were gathered from the lists of references found in relevant articles.

Regarding the literature on the Troubles and the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland, on-line databases were utilised, including the Online Research Bank (ORB) Children's Research Database [developed by Access Research Knowledge (ARK)] and the CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet) Web service (located in the University of Ulster, and part of INCORE and ARK).

## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This is a cross-sectional study, as it looks at a sample of children and their parents at one point in time. It intends to be a snapshot, examining how children understand living in Northern Ireland now, and how they understand it was like before they were born, as well as how this might be influenced by their parents' perceptions and experiences.

In terms of its epistemological context, the study was located within a "pragmatist paradigm" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2011), as it followed the principle that "what works" to answer the research questions is the most useful approach to the investigation'. This enabled 'meanings in data to be probed, corroboration and triangulation to be practised, rich(er) data to be gathered, and new modes of thinking to emerge where paradoxes between two individual data sources are found' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 23). Thus, a mixed methods approach was used. In particular, the study employed two methods of data collection: 1. a draw-and-tell technique with children, in order to address Aim 1 and Aim 3; and 2. a questionnaire with their parents, in order to fulfil Aim 2 and Aim 3 (see Introduction).

Despite using a mixed methods approach, the study is largely quantitative, in terms of the data collected and the analysis conducted (i.e. mostly statistical). A quantitative approach is used when the aim is to identify factors that influence an outcome, or try to understand the best predictors of outcomes, or maybe test a theory or explanation (Creswell, 2003). In this case, this study intended to put to the test the theory of trans-generational transmission of trauma within the context of a society coming out of conflict as it is Northern Ireland today, as well as to identify factors that might influence children's understandings of the society they live in, now and in its recent past. Therefore, a largely quantitative approach was deemed suitable for this research; although it is acknowledged here that a more detailed qualitative study would enhance and largely add to this study's conclusions, as a qualitative approach could develop a detailed view of the meaning of a concept or a phenomenon for individuals (Creswell, 2003). In other words, by using a quantitative approach, the study facilitated the articulation of new questions which future qualitative research could aim to answer.

## 1. Draw-and-tell

### *Participants*

School children in P6 and P7, thus aged 9-11 years, in primary schools across Northern Ireland, took part in the study. These children were born immediately after the peace agreement in Northern Ireland in 1998. In total, 179 children (106 girls and 73 boys) from six primary schools in Northern Ireland took part: 91 of them were 9-10 years of age and attended Primary 6 (P6), and 88 of them were 10-11 years of age and attended Primary 7 (P7). The participant sample represented 0.4% of the total population of 45,673 children attending P6 and P7 in Northern Ireland during the data collection period (figures extracted from Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency, 2008/2009).

Three different types of schools took part. Thirty-seven children in the study attended an integrated school; while 71 attended one of three controlled schools, and 71 attended one of two maintained schools. All the schools were co-educational, except for the two maintained schools; one of them was an all-boys school and the other one was an all-girls school. The integrated school was located in a rural seaside town, while the other five schools were all located in a socially disadvantaged area of Belfast.

### *Research tool*

The research tools consisted of: two A4 sheets of white paper, one with the heading '*Living in Northern Ireland now*' (Picture A), and one with the heading '*Living in Northern Ireland before I was born*' (Picture B). Brief interviews were used to elicit picture-related explanations, asking the child, "Can you tell me a bit about your drawing?". A digital tape-recorder was used to record these explanations.

### *Research procedure*

The sample was drawn from a range of Northern Irish primary schools, including integrated, maintained, and controlled schools, and from rural and urban backgrounds. Non-probabilistic sampling techniques were employed to select the participating schools (Hartas, 2010). Initially, convenience sampling was used to recruit the school that took part in the pilot study. It was known to the researcher and the principal agreed to take part. After that, purposive sampling was used when letters with information on the study were sent to a range of primary schools in Belfast (names provided by the

Belfast Education Board), and follow-up phone calls were made, and e-mails were sent to, the principals of these schools. After recruiting a primary school, a “snowball” technique (Coleman, 1958) (i.e. a chain-referral sampling method) was adopted whereby the principal identified two other schools with similar characteristics, i.e. being controlled and located in the same deprived area. The principal sent e-mails to the principals of these other schools, and then follow-up phone calls were made by the researcher. This technique was also used in another school, which was all-girls maintained, where the principal was asked to identify another school in the area that was all-boys maintained, so to keep the balance between boys and girls participating in the study. Chain-referral sampling methods have been widely used to recruit hidden populations (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004), and in this study, a “snowball” technique was selectively and successfully used to access the desirable sample of children.

The research setting for data collection was the children’s classroom of the school they attended. Data collection took place at a time recommended by the classroom teachers, so as to cause the least amount of disruption to the normal school day. The researcher joined each class and was introduced by the teacher. She then explained to the children briefly why they were asked to take part in the research. “We want to find out about what it is like for you to grow up in Northern Ireland, and how it was like for your parents to grow up here, and if they didn’t grow up here, for the people who were here before you were born”. In order not to sensitise children to issues they may not be aware of and in contrast with other research conducted on children’s understandings of peace and war, the use of words such as “violence”, “war”, “the Troubles”, or “peace” was avoided (Usta & Farver, 2005). The children were then asked to draw Picture A and Picture B. Drawing sheets, pencils, markers and crayons were distributed. Children whose parents did not give permission to take part or who did not want to take part themselves were asked by the teacher to do an alternative task (e.g. work on their homework, or do some work on the computer). In one small school, many of the pupils’ parents did not consent for their children to take part, but six children, whose parents had consented, agreed to take part, and since it was acceptable with the school staff, these children were taken to another empty classroom, and asked to draw, supervised by the researcher and the principal (as she agreed to do so given that the teacher had to teach the rest of the class).

Drawing the two pictures took up to one hour. Children were asked to write their first name at the back of their pictures, so the researcher was able to track the two pictures drawn by the same child. After the children completed their drawings, they were asked individually to briefly explain their pictures. For this purpose, children were taken into the quiet reading corner of their classroom, within sight of the attending classroom teacher. Picture-elicited responses were tape-recorded. Children that did not feel comfortable to talk to the researcher about their drawings were given the option to write a brief explanation on the back of each picture. However, all the children that took part seemed comfortable enough to talk to the researcher, and that situation did not arise.

**2. Parental questionnaires**

***Participants***

The parent/s or guardian/s of each participating child were asked to sign a consent form and complete a questionnaire. In total, the parents of 73 of the participating children (41% response rate) filled in the questionnaire.

Most of the parents who filled in the questionnaire were the child's mother (n=58). Only 14 were the children's father, and one was the step-father. Sixteen were 25-30 years old, 31 were 31-40 years old, and 26 were over 40 years old. The majority lived in inner city (n=51), 8 were living in the outskirts of the city, 8 lived in a village and 6 lived in the country. Only 16 lived in a fairly mixed area, while 35 lived in a mostly Protestant area, and 22 lived in a mostly Catholic area.

***Research tool***

The parent/guardian of each child participant was asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questionnaire included:

- demographical general questions;
- questions regarding parental experience of the Troubles;
- questions regarding communication between the parent and the child, in order to explore how do parents transmit their experiences to their children;
- questions regarding the peace process taken and adapted from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (1998-2005) (particularly, from the module 'Political

Attitudes'), in order to elicit parental political opinions about living in a post-conflict society;

- questions regarding gender roles were also taken from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (1998, 2002) (from the module 'Gender and Family Roles'), to uncover parental gender attitudes and values;
- the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), as a measure of parental general psychological wellbeing (Goldberg and Williams, 1988); and
- the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), in order to give an indication of children's behaviour, as viewed by their parents.

The 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) has been widely used in Northern Ireland (e.g. the Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey; the Northern Ireland Life and Times and the Young Life and Times surveys) and internationally as an index of psychological morbidity (Goldberg, McDowell, & Newell, 1996). It is designed to identify short-term changes in mental health. The GHQ-12 is the shortest form of this measure, and is quick and reliable, ideal for research studies. The scale asks whether the respondent has experienced a particular symptom or behaviour recently (e.g. anxiety, loss of confidence, sleep-loss due to worry, general happiness). Each item is rated on a four-point scale (less than usual, no more than usual, rather more than usual, or much more than usual). It is scored on the standard binary scale (0-0-1-1), giving a maximum total score of 12, and having a threshold score of 4, at which respondents are classified as *cases* or *non-cases*. Scoring 4 or over, and thus being classified as a *case*, means that the respondent is likely to be suffering levels of tension, anxiety, and depression that have an adverse effect on their physical and mental wellbeing.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire administered to the parents and teachers of children aged 4-16, providing 'balanced coverage of children and young people's behaviours, emotions, and relationships' (Goodman, 1997, p. 581). In this study, only parents completed the measure. It was 'designed to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists' (ibid), and is being used as a research tool throughout the world in social and educational studies. It is composed of 25 items divided into five scales of five items each, including:

- emotional symptoms (e.g. ‘often seems worried’; ‘easily scared’; ‘often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful’);
- conduct problems (e.g. ‘generally obedient’; ‘often lies or cheats’);
- hyperactivity/inattention (e.g. ‘restless, overactive’; ‘easily distracted’; ‘good attention span’);
- peer relationship problems (e.g. ‘rather solitary’; ‘has at least one good friend); and
- pro-social behaviour (e.g. ‘considerate of other people’s feelings’; ‘kind to younger children’).

A total difficulties score is based on the combined scores of each of the scales, except the pro-social scale. The scores can be classified as normal, borderline or abnormal. According to the developers of the measure, an abnormal score on the total difficulties score can be used to identify likely ‘cases’ with mental health disorders, although this is only considered a rough and ready method for detecting disorders. Approximately 10% of a community sample scores within the abnormal band on any given score, with a further 10% in the borderline band. Although the terminology of normal, borderline and abnormal scores can be potentially labelling and unhelpful, it is also used in this document, as it is being widely used to describe SDQ scores.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey is a large survey, set up by Queen’s University Belfast and University of Ulster, which runs every year since 1998, to record the attitudes, values and beliefs of the people in Northern Ireland on a wide range of issues. The results of each survey are publically available within six months from the end of the fieldwork on their website (ARK, 2011). The questions within the survey are grouped into modules, and the range of modules varies from year to year. Some of the questions within the survey were used in this study’s parental questionnaire, as results from this research can be then compared for the whole population in Northern Ireland (see Chapter 5).

***Research procedure***

Each participating child took home the parent questionnaire, together with a consent form, in a sealed envelope. Parents were asked to return the parent questionnaire to the school in another sealed envelope (provided) within one week. The envelopes were then collected from the participating schools. In schools where only a considerably small number of questionnaires were returned, follow-up phone calls were made to the

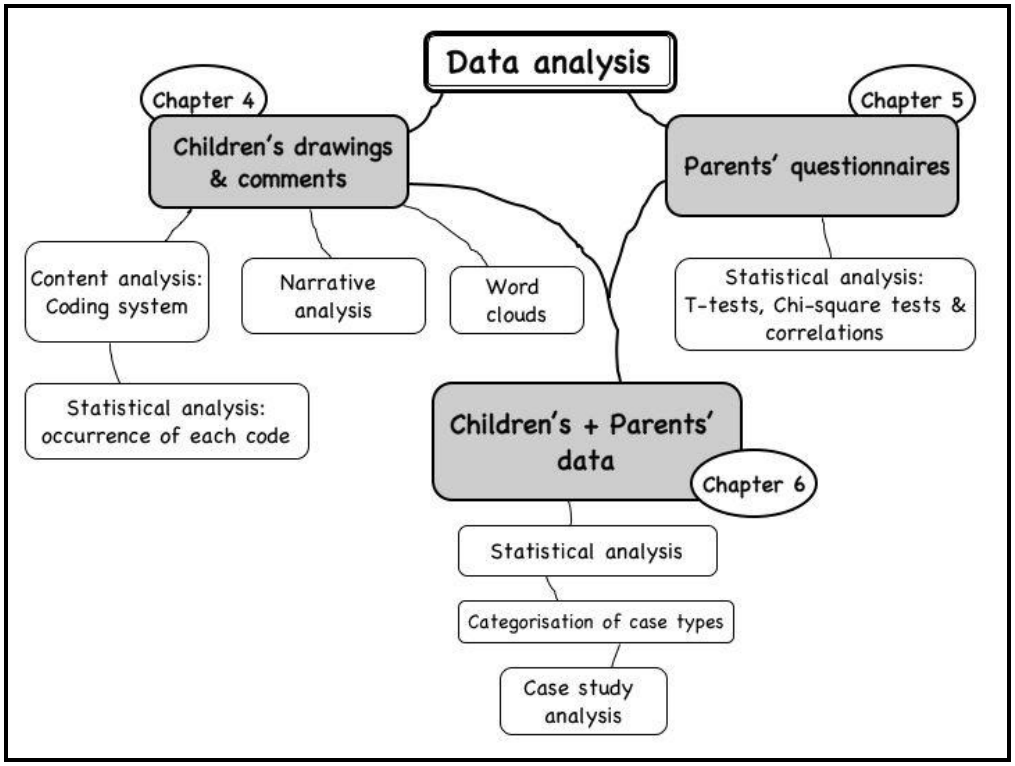
school to check if more had been returned. In one of the schools, re-issue letters and questionnaires were given to the participating children to bring home to their parents, as this was the school were the pilot study was conducted and only very few parents had returned the questionnaire. The strategy was relatively successful, and 12 more questionnaires were then received.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the different types of data was conducted as follows (see Figure 3.1):

- Qualitative data from the children's drawings and their explanations were analysed using content analysis through the software package NVivo8, and narrative analysis;
- Quantitative data from the children's drawings and comments (i.e. occurrence of each theme) was analysed using SPSS. The focus of the analysis was to identify differences and similarities between groups of children in their perspectives of the country/area they live in;
- Qualitative data from the children's comments were depicted in 'word clouds', used to highlight differences and similarities between different groups of children in the words they used in their comments and stories;
- Quantitative data from the parents' questionnaires were analysed using SPSS. The focus of the analysis was to identify: a) parent characteristics, experiences and opinions; b) differences and similarities between different groups of parents; c) associations among parent characteristics, experiences and opinions;
- Quantitative data from the children's drawings/comments and the parents' questionnaires were combined together using SPSS, and connections between the two sets of data made; and
- Case study analyses of child-parent dyads were conducted (n=4).

*Figure 3.1: Data analysis diagram*




**Children's drawings and comments**

In terms of analysing children's drawings, three major approaches have traditionally been used: a developmental approach (focused on the sophistication of the drawing, to determine children's intellectual and emotional maturity/ability); a psychological approach (focused on finding "hidden" or subconscious meanings, or the child's "inner self", and often used for psychological assessment or therapy); and a meaning-making approach (focused on understanding children's views on a topic, their perceptions, thoughts and experiences) (Holliday, Harrison & McLeod, 2009). In this study, children's drawings were considered from a meaning-making perspective. Thus, rather than appraising the cognitive or emotional features or the aesthetic quality of the pictures, the message conveyed through the children's drawings was the focus of analysis.

The children's drawings in combination with their narratives describing the meaning or story behind the picture were analysed with regard to the insight they provided to children's understandings of Northern Ireland's present and past. Children's pictures were scanned, input along the transcribed comments in the qualitative analysis package NVivo8 for PCs (Wiltshier, 2011), and analysed in line with these, using

content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). In other words, children's drawings and the accompanying narratives were examined for recurring themes, thematic coding categories were identified, and detailed codes developed, allowing categorisation of the drawings. Codes were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. This coding system incorporated elements of a system developed in the Netherlands by Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1993) and adopted for use in Northern Ireland by McLernon (1998) and McLernon and Cairns (2001), where responses involving weapons or soldiers were coded as categories for war, and responses suggesting the negation or absence of war were coded as categories for peace. It also combined selected themes from Lewis *et al.* (1994) 'You're your neighbourhood procedure'. Given that the concepts of peace and war were never mentioned during the data collection process in this research, other themes also emerged from the drawings (e.g. school, and friends or family issues). The key categories developed in this coding frame used in the present study were as follows:

- *Violence*, as defined by Lewis and Osofsky (1997: 283), as 'an act or behaviour that causes damage or injury, or human figures engaged in verbal threats or activity labelled as fighting, hitting, someone starting a fire, or robbery'; but also including images associated with war, like soldiers, army barracks or tanks, even if not involved in violence in the picture; and references to fighting or riots in the children's comments. Themes included within this category were:
    - *Instruments of violence/war*, including weapons, soldiers and army bases, tanks, and bombs;
    - *Violent/war activities*, such as shooting, hitting, fighting, throwing bombs, etc;
    - *Negative consequences of violence/war*, such as death, injury, and houses on fire or in ruins; and
    - *Negative emotions*, such as people crying, or being frightened.
- *Policing*, which included images of police officers, cars or helicopters.
- *Awareness of sectarianism and community relationships*, which included two main themes:
    - *Markers of difference*, such as clear reference to the two main ethno-political communities (i.e. Protestant and Catholics, or Nationalists and Unionists); flags; marches/parades; and structural divisions (i.e. peace walls); and
    - *Sectarian/political violence*, including references to paramilitary groups.

- *Negative elements* (other than violence), which included very diverse aspects of the country, neighbourhood or people's lives that were not necessarily related with violence or conflict, but could be described as having more 'negative' rather than 'positive' connotations. Themes included here are:
    - *Accidents, death, and illness*;
    - *Hardship/poverty/unfairness*;
    - *Drugs and graffiti*;
    - *Rubbish/litter*
    - *Negative actions*, such as polluting or dropping litter;
    - *Negative emotions*, such as people crying or being sad; and
    - *Pollution*.
- *Positive elements of peace/hope*. Themes included within this category were:
    - *Nature*, including flowers, the sun, the sea, fields, animals, and pets;
    - *Close social network*, such as family and friends;
    - *Positive actions/activities*, such as playing, swimming, or having fun;
    - *Positive emotions*, such as people being happy or smiling;
    - *Negation of war/violence*, which would include images of tranquillity or quietness, and images of the child's home or school, as well as references to freedom, rights, or wealth;
    - *Achievements, festivities and celebrations*, such as passing a test, Christmas, special dates, or festivals;
    - *References to peace*, that is, direct mention of the concept of peace.
- *Neighbourhood physical characteristics*. Themes included within this category were:
    - *Houses* (excluding their own house, coded under 'negation of war/violence'*;*
    - *Schools* (excluding the school they attend, coded under 'negation of war/violence')*;*
    - *Streets/Roads;*
    - *Shops;*
    - *Parks;*
    - *Landmarks*, such as the 'big wheel' in Belfast or the Giant's Causeway;
    - *Churches;*
    - *Paths/walkways;* and
    - *Other buildings*

Multiple categories could be found in each of the drawings and accompanying narratives. On the basis of these coding conventions, all drawings and comments were analysed by the author of the thesis, and for inter-observer reliability tests, 10% of the pictures were coded by a second coder independently (blind coding) based on the same framework. Inter-observer agreement of blind coding was 89%. For the remaining 11%, an agreed code was used for the analysis of results. Data from the drawings were then input in SPSS for Windows, version 15.0 (SPSS INC., Chicago, 2006), and occurrence of each theme depicted in the drawings was compared between age (P6s and P7s), gender (boys and girls), and type of school (those attending integrated, controlled, and maintained schools) groups, using Pearson's chi-square.

However, by using children's explanations and comments, the drawings were not only analysed in a quantitative manner by counting the occurrence of each coded category, but they were also analysed using a narrative approach, as the drawings explained a story as well. Narrative analysis has been defined as 'an approach to elicitation and analysis of data that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts' (Bryman, 2004, p. 412). When using this analysis, what matters is more how people make sense of their stories (the *hows*) rather than the actual events that constitute their stories (the *whats*). As part of this analysis, the types of story in terms of its source were categorised and counted as: own recent experiences; witnessing different events; recent local news; past stories told by parents; and family stories. In addition, the drawings and comments were also analysed by comparing the content in the document setting out the school curriculum in Northern Ireland and the content of the drawings/comments themselves.

Word clouds of the children's comments of their drawings were also created, in order to illustrate differences between groups of children defined by age, gender and type of school. Word clouds are visual representations for text data, depicting the word frequency in a given text as a weighted list. They are often used to depict keyword metadata (tags) on websites, but they are also proliferating in visualisation and text analysis (Wu *et al.*, 2011), and have recently been popularly used to visualise the topical content of political speeches (Kaptein & Marx, 2010). The importance of each word is shown with font size or colour, which makes it easy to quickly perceive the most frequently used words, and thus understand the major content of a text collection

instantly (Wu *et al.*, 2011). The use of word clouds has been suggested as part of a useful method of exploratory qualitative data analysis in social research (Cidell, 2010; McNaught & Lam, 2010).

Different word clouds were created of the comments of girls and boys, children in P6 and P7 classrooms, and children attending the three types of schools, for each of their two pictures. Thus, in total, 14 word clouds were generated, which served to illustrate differences and similarities among these groups, and among their pictures, as 'comparison of the word clouds generated from different texts should quickly reveal the differences between the ideas contained in these texts' (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 631). Two web-based tools for making word clouds were used: TagCrowd (2010) and Wordle (2010). As a first step, all the comments for each group of children (e.g. all the participating girls) of a particular picture (i.e. either Picture A or Picture B) were introduced in TagCrowd. This tool already ignores common words in a chosen language, in this case, English, but it also allows excluding unwanted words. Excluded words were: Northern Ireland, living, born, now (as these were already in the title of the pictures), did/didn't, could/couldn't, can/can't, yeah, do/don't, was/wasn't, were/weren't, done. In addition, the tool gives the choice of whether to show frequencies or not, and this option was selected. The word cloud showing the most frequently used words and their frequencies was then created and saved. Its format made some of the smaller words hard to see. Thus, the second step consisted in inputting this information (frequently used words and frequencies) into Wordle (in the "Advanced" tab) to create a more appealing word cloud. Wordle, in contrast to TagCrowd, allows the user to choose the font, the layout and the colour. Word clouds created with Wordle 'are striking graphic statements. Beyond presenting word frequency data, wordles revel in the possibilities of color, typography, and composition' (Viégas et al., 2009, p. 1137). The same font (i.e. Teen), layout (i.e. horizontal) and colour (i.e. black and white) were used in all the word clouds created, which were then compared.

**Parental questionnaires**

The data from the parents' questionnaires were input into an SPSS file, and a series of descriptive statistics (i.e. cross-tabulations, frequencies, means and standard deviations) were conducted in order to analyse the data. Some Pearson correlation coefficients (r), chi-square tests and T-tests were also calculated.

### Children's and parents' data

The two SPSS files (i.e. one containing the children's data and one containing the parents' data) were then merged, thus bringing together both sets of data. T-tests and chi-square tests were carried out exploring associations between independent variables, such as level of violence in the area, gender, parental experiences of the Troubles, and parents' general psychological health; and dependent variables, such as occurrence of each coded category in the drawings.

Case study analyses were then conducted for different types of children-parent dyads. Four types of children-parent dyads were identified: 1) children who drew violence within their pictures and their parents had talked with them about their conflict experience; 2) children who did not depict violence but their parents had talked with them about their violent experience/s; 3) children who drew violence but their parents had not talked with them about the conflict; and 4) children who did not draw violence and their parents had not communicated any Troubles-related experience to them. Four child-parent dyad case studies were then identified for each of these types, and the parent and child data were examined in detail for each one. As Stake (1995, p. xi) argues, 'a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case'.

## 5. PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted with the integrated school in a rural area of Northern Ireland. Data (drawings and comments) were gathered in two visits (26.11.08 and 8.12.08). Eighteen P6 children and nineteen P7 children took part. Nineteen parental questionnaires were completed and returned. After the pilot, the parental questionnaire was only slightly modified, in terms of adjusting the wording of a couple of questions, i.e. in question 16, 'If yes, please describe…' was added; question 26b's and 26c's wording was slightly modified; and question 28 was changed from 'Do you know whether your child has experienced…?' to 'Has your child experienced…?' (See Appendix 1, containing the final questionnaire). The instructions for the drawing activity seemed to be easily understood by the children, thus they were not modified. The data collected in the pilot was included into the analysis.

## 6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Queen's University Belfast Research Ethics Committee. Permission to carry out the research was granted from the principal of each participating school. Parental consent was sought for participation of child participants and assent was sought from the children prior to participation. More detail on the ethical issues considered in this study is specified below.

### Access and consent

Access to research participants can be gained in a number of ways. When undertaking research with children or with any particularly vulnerable population, a number of gatekeepers are encountered. When participants are accessed through organisational settings, such as schools, access needs to be negotiated through individuals or groups managing these institutions, in this case, school principals. In this study, they were given information about the research and what their participation involved, and were asked for informed consent to access the children. Once school principals had granted access to the children, and the teachers had agreed to take part, letters were handed out by the teachers to the children to give to their parents. The letters contained: 1) an information sheet with information on the research and what the children and the parents themselves would be asked to do (Appendix 2); and 2) a refusal form. There are two main ways of obtaining a parent or guardian's permission for a child to take part in a research study. Opt-in or active consent requires the guardian to give written permission for the minor to participate, whereas an opt-out or passive consent approach means that participants are understood to have given consent if they do not retract their permission (Jason *et al.*, 2001). In this research, an opt-out approach or passive consent procedure was used. Those parents who did not consent completed the refusal form and gave it back to the school.

Despite the fact that an opt-out approach is controversial when conducting social research, this was used for a number of reasons. First, it was considered that schools, in particular school principals, as gatekeepers acting in *loci parentis*, and thus having legal responsibility for the pupils' wellbeing in that setting, had already actively consented to the research taking place, and agreed with the opt-out approach for the parents. Second, careful attention was paid in choosing the topics of the drawings to be general, and not sensitive in nature. There has been more debate around the opt-out approach, when the research touches on sensitive areas, such as sexuality and drugs

(e.g. Testa & Coleman, 2006; White *et al.*, 2004). Third, the opt-out approach appeared to be a valid way of consent, since some parents returned the refusal form for their children not to take part. Finally, it was considered that due to increased response cost, an opt-in approach could have reduced and biased the sample (Esbensen *et al.*, 1999; White *et al.*, 2004), as evidence has been found that parents that return consent forms are somewhat different from those who do not return them (Jason *et al.*, 2001).

After about two weeks, the researcher contacted the school to find out if any refusal forms had been returned. If most of the parents of the children in a class did not return refusal forms, children in that class were informed about the research in very simple terms; what their participation involved (drawing two pictures and explaining them briefly afterwards); and about privacy and confidentiality issues; and asked if they would like to take part. As Fine and Sandstrom (1988) argue, children should be given a genuine chance to refuse to take part, and if they do so, they should not be queried about it, their actions/responses should not be recorded, and they should not be included in any publication (cited by Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Thus, in this study, children were reassured that it was ok if they did not want to take part (and those who refused were never questioned), and that their participation was entirely voluntary. This information was given in the class, before starting the data gathering process. Before the researcher entered the classroom, the teacher gave an information sheet (specifically designed for children) to the children to ensure that they were informed prior to agreeing to participate (Appendix 3).

**Risks and benefits to participants**

Every effort was made to ensure that participants felt safe and at ease. The setting of the classroom is a familiar environment for the child. Classmates and their teacher were present when the children drew their pictures and when they were asked to explain them. Asking children to draw gives children 'the opportunity to draw as much or as little as they like' (Miles, 2000, p.139), and whatever they like (depending on the openness of the activity set by the researchers). In this research, the titles of the drawings were quite open and broad, so as to give children freedom to choose what to draw. When asked individually to discuss the drawings, care was taken not to encourage participants to talk about traumatic or difficult sensitive issues. However, if these issues had arisen, the situation would have been dealt as sensitively as possible and, if necessary, contact details for counsellors would have been provided. The

researcher had the necessary skills to talk with the children. She had received training specifically for interviewing children. She was also police checked.

A disadvantage of the classroom setting, as of any institutional setting, is that children might feel pressured to participate, thus not allowed to exercise choice. Pupils might be told that they are taking part by their teachers, and the research activity could then become or be perceived as part of their overall class work; however, there are ways to manage the issue of "assumed" consent (Wiles *et al.*, 2005). In this case, all efforts were made to reassure children that it was all right to refuse to participate, and that if they decided to decline taking part, they would not be punished or made to feel excluded. This was done by re-iterating these issues to the children in each classroom, and when there were pupils who appeared reluctant to participate, the researcher told them that it was perfectly ok not to.

Regarding the parental questionnaire, this addressed quite sensitive issues, therefore could raise some difficult memories. Contact details of support organisations were available from the researcher or the school, although none of the parents requested these.

Giving payments (whether cash or vouchers) to participants has been a controversial practice in social research. While some argue that payments might pressurise people into taking part in the research, it could be argued that payments should be given as an acknowledgement of the participants' time and contribution (Fargas-Malet *et al.*, 2010). Some ethical guidelines have supported this practice (Children in Scotland, 2001), whereas an EU Directive (L121/34) from 2001 advised that paying children to take part in research should be illegal (Cree *et al.*, 2002). Some researchers have decided not to pay or give vouchers to the participants, but to offer them a practical gift, such as a pack of paper and pens as a sign of their gratitude (Cree *et al.*, 2002). In this study, with the consent of the participants and as a 'thank-you' gift, the researcher produced an A0 poster for each of the classrooms that took part in the research (Appendix 4), compiling all or most of the drawings created by the children in that classroom. Like Bushin (2007), the researcher informed the participants about the poster after data collection was complete, to ensure it did not act as an incentive. In other words, the poster was not mentioned when the researcher introduced the task or while it was being conducted. However, after each child had finished explaining their drawings, they

were then asked whether they would like their pictures to be included in the poster produced for their class or not. Their names were not mentioned on the poster. Posters were brought to the children's classrooms approximately two to three weeks after the data collection took place, when the questionnaires completed by the parents were also collected. In all the participating classrooms, they appeared to be very well received by the children and also their teachers.

### Privacy and confidentiality

All information gathered during the course of the research was kept strictly confidential. However, it was clear to the researcher and the participants were made aware that if a child disclosed anything that indicated that he/she or any other child was at risk of or involved in harmful activity, the researcher had the duty to pass this information on to their teacher or the school principal. If this situation had arisen, the researcher would have talked to the child first and discussed what would happen. However, that situation did not arise during data collection.

All the information gathered was stored securely, coded anonymously, and presented in aggregate form, so that the identity of any individual or home was never disclosed outside the research site. The anonymised data will be retained for two years and then destroyed in accordance with the Q.U.B. Data Disposal Policy. The procedures for handling, processing, storage and destruction of data gathered in this study are compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Q.U.B. Data Protection Policy.

## 7. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section focuses on methodological considerations relevant in the study, including: the classroom as a research setting; using drawings in research with children; using questionnaires; and the issues of validity and reliability. The advantages and disadvantages of the methods used are examined.

### The classroom as research setting

Although there are certain advantages of conducting research with children in schools, such as being more cost-effective and efficient for the researcher (Scott, 2000), and being a familiar and safe setting for the children, there are also challenges that the researcher tried to minimise. Firstly, it might be difficult to find a suitable time and

space, due to limitations of timetables and facilities (Punch, 2002b; Kellet & Ding, 2004). In this research, a date and time was agreed beforehand for the researcher to be able to use the children's classroom. Secondly, there is the risk of children interpreting participation in the research as "school work" (Kellet & Ding, 2004) or feeling pressure to give the right answers to research questions (Punch, 2002a), when perceiving the researcher as in a "teacher" role (Goodenough et al., 2003; Hill, 2006). Thus, as Clark (2005) points out, children 'may try to "second guess" what adults hope they will say' (p. 492), or guess what the researcher is "getting at" (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999). In terms of these risks, the researcher emphasized and reassured the children that there were no good or bad drawings or/and no right or wrong explanations. Despite that, children asked whether they could draw certain things, often checking back for approval.

As previously mentioned, one of the main problems of undertaking research with children at school revolves around the issue of informed consent. The school context, engraved by unequal power relations, may mean that children could feel pressurised into take part, finding it difficult to opt out, once the principal and teachers have agreed (David *et al.*, 2001). For instance, in this research, two teachers were adamant for the children to take part, and seemed to be disappointed with the children who chose not to take part. The researcher, however, emphasised that the children had the right to opt out themselves and a few children chose not to take part.

Another difficulty is negotiating privacy (Mauthner, 1997) and keeping confidentiality (Barker & Weller, 2003). In both the school setting and the home setting, there seems to be 'similar processes of surveillance and compliance' (Barker & Weller, 2003, p. 47), where 'obtaining a separate space away from the classroom or the main family room can be a sensitive issue: partly, adults do not consider children's need for private space for an interview; partly, adults who see themselves as "protecting" children – parents, teachers – may feel that children do not have these rights at all' (Mauthner, 1997, p. 18). It also can be difficult when there is a shortage of space. In this case, data was collected in the classroom in the presence of the teacher. Children drew their pictures on their tables with their classmates sitting beside them, and afterwards they were asked individually to explain their drawings to the researcher in a distant corner of the classroom or in the corridor just outside the classroom. When classrooms were big or when comments were recorded outside the main classroom, certain privacy was

reached while children explained their drawings, but that was much more difficult while they were drawing in the classroom with everybody around them. Despite that, children appeared comfortable when drawing, since they were very familiar within that space, and the topics of the pictures were carefully chosen not to be sensitive in nature.

Another issue to consider when conducting research in schools is the difficulties that researchers might experience when trying to negotiate their position with both children and adults within this institutional setting. The school is a key social setting in children's lives in Western societies, 'organized around the power of the adults to determine the character of children's experience' (Mayall, 2002, p. 20). In this study, the activity became totally structured within the institutional context. For example, in some classrooms, the children raised their arms when asking the researcher a question. One of the teachers asked the pupils to raise their hand whenever they had finished their drawings, and decided who was next in the queue to speak to the researcher. Also, teachers often told children to be quiet while they were drawing. Thus, the researcher felt placed in an awkward middle position between the "all-powerful" teacher and the "powerless" children. That was a difficult issue to address, since she could not undermine the teacher's position of power, but she always tried to make the children as comfortable as possible, by talking to them and answering their questions in a relaxed manner, and stressed that the activity was not a school task.

**Use of drawings in research**

The use of visual methods with children and young people has proved useful in the context of Northern Ireland in helping break the "culture of silence" surrounding the political conflict, by assisting them in vividly representing its impact on their daily lives (Leitch, 2008; Leonard, 2007; Kilkelly *et al.*, 2005) and, as such, there are numerous reasons for using drawings (in combination with writing or conversation) in research with children. For example, most school-aged children are familiar with the activity of drawing (Horstman *et al.*, 2008) and with the required materials and tools, as they are often given the chance to express themselves graphically in the classroom or in other contexts (Walker *et al.*, 2009). Drawing can help children relax and establish rapport, can prompt and trigger memories, and may help them organize their own narratives (Hill, 1997; Miles, 2000) and/or express fears, feelings and thoughts of a sensitive nature (Horstman *et al.*, 2008). This technique also enables children to gain more control over the research process, since it gives them an opportunity to draw as much

or as little as they like. It also gives them time to reflect on their own ideas (Miles, 2000). A draw-and-write/talk technique can also be particularly useful in empowering children and young people with communication impairment (e.g. Holliday *et al.*, 2009) or marginal linguistic skills (e.g children with poor written skills, or migrant children whose first language is not the one used in the research) (White, Bushin, Carpena-Méndez & Ní Laoire, 2010). Finally, drawing can be a useful and quick way to gain considerable amounts of information in a relatively short period of time.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to using drawing techniques with children. For example, not all children consider drawing to be fun and some children may be inhibited about their drawing capabilities. Older children may not wish to draw pictures, since they might see it as "babyish". In short, it may not suit all children. When using the technique in a classroom setting, drawings can be easily seen, discussed and copied by peers, and thus 'may illustrate socially constructed rather than individual ideas' (Leonard, 2006c, p.61). This was illustrated in some of the drawings in this study, where a few children drew very similar pictures. In addition, children may draw what they find easy to portray or what they think would please the researcher or other adults. In order to mitigate these drawbacks, it was emphasized to the children that it was not a drawing competition, that they could draw whatever they felt in relation to the two topics, and that their explanation of each of the drawings was what the researcher was most interested in. Finally, researchers using this method can be uncertain about how to analyse this kind of data (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999), and when analysing the drawings, they might make assumptions about what children are trying to communicate. Therefore, as drawings alone are not enough to uncover children's understandings, verbal input from the child on the content of his or her picture is needed to ascertain the meanings he/she wishes to convey. It has been argued that when a draw-and-tell technique is used with children, they provide more than twice as much information than if drawing had been used as a stand-alone activity (Walker *et al.*, 2009). Thus, in this study, in order to avoid placing the researcher's interpretation on the child's work, children were asked to describe their own drawings, and the subsequent analysis relied heavily on these comments.

**The use of questionnaires**

Questionnaires are an easy and quick way to collect large amounts of standard data and reach large samples, as they do not require the presence of the researcher when

being administered. They are also comparatively quite straightforward to analyse, and using questions that have already been used in other studies has the advantage of being able to compare results.

However, questionnaires also have limitations and disadvantages, such as: usually low return rates; requiring a certain level of literacy (that not all participants might have); participants' answers being dependent on biases such as social desirability, context effects and acquiescence bias; and 'the possible unsophistication and limited scope of the data that are collected, and from the likely limited flexibility of response' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 377). In addition, questionnaires cannot provide with in-depth information on how exactly and why people have certain perceptions or attitudes. That would need to be follow-up using other methods.

**Validity and reliability**

In terms of validity, defined as 'whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are' (Joppe, 2000, p.1; cited in Golafshani, 2003), the instruments used appeared to accurately look at what they intended to. The drawings, together with the comments, reflected children's general understanding of their country's past and present, although despite the instruction given to the children to refer to their parents' lives, some children reflected a "far gone" past (lived by their ancestors or grandparents) rather than the recent past (lived by their parents). The parental questionnaire was designed to measure a number of different variables, and borrowed some questions from another questionnaire, as well as standardised measures that have been widely used in this type of research.

In terms of reliability, defined as 'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study' (Joppe, 2000, p.1; cited in Golafshani, 2003), this is difficult to assess, as the sample of children that took part was relatively small and largely drawn from two particular areas of the country. Thus, we cannot know whether the results found would be different if the same methodology was to be used with children from other areas. However, the parents' questionnaire used reliable standardised measures and questions used in another large survey that have been repeatedly used. In addition, in terms of the framework for analysis of the drawings, this proved to be quite reliable, as a second person found similar results using the same coding scheme.

## 8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As is the case for any research, there obviously are a number of limitations to this study. For instance, the sample of children that took part does not allow for an exploration of the variation between urban and rural settings, thus we cannot draw firm conclusions as to whether living in urban and rural areas has an impact on children's understandings of their country's past and present. In addition, although the response rate for the parental questionnaire was not lesser than the expected for other studies, the number of parents that took part was considerably lower than the number of children, and that affected the number of parent-child dyads involved in the study. This, in turn, had an impact on the type of statistics that could be executed, and the type and quality of conclusions that could be drawn from the findings. In other words, because of small numbers, associations linking what children depicted in their pictures and their parents' attitudes and experiences were not statistically significant.

Furthermore, although this research helps examine children's views of living in a "post-conflict" society such as Northern Ireland now and their understandings of their recent local past, it does not allow us to explore the reasons behind them or the way perceptions and experiences have been transmitted between parents and children, as the study was largely quantitative, being conducted through short-term encounters with a large number of children in their own classrooms. This has implications for the conclusions, as the details on how trans-generational transmission of violent/traumatic experiences actually works could not be explored in this study. A qualitative follow-up study, involving more in-depth (individual or group) interviews with the children as well as their parents, could investigate these issues (i.e. whether, why and how parents communicate their experiences, grandparents' role in the transmission, how children understand parents' stories, other external influences, etc) in more detail, and provide answers to the questions that this study has brought to light.

Another area that could be further explored is history education. The study suggests that parts of the data collected can be explained by the influence of school and the curriculum in children's understandings. However, the methods used do not allow us to detail to what extent this is the case. Thus, a follow-up study could employ a teacher survey or interviews with teachers and principals, as well as interviews with the children on the specific topic of history education, and thus find out whether and how the

historical narratives children learn at school complement, corroborate, refute or add to the historical narratives learned at home.

## 9. SUMMARY

In this study, a mixed method approach was used to answer the questions formulated in the Introduction, which, in terms of data collection methods, consisted of a draw-and-tell technique employed with the participating children and a questionnaire for their parents. In terms of analysis, a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, as the data was triangulated. Part of the originality of this research stems from the way the particular methods were used when gathering the data (e.g. not mentioning certain “leading” words to the children), and the variety of techniques used to analyse the findings (e.g. the use of word clouds).

In this chapter, the different decisions that were taken have been explained, particularly in terms of ethical considerations (e.g. access and consent), and the advantages and disadvantages of the techniques used and the research setting (i.e. the classroom) have been explored. The following chapters report on the findings of the study.

# CHAPTER 4: THE CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, 179 children aged 10-11 years, who were born after the ceasefires in Northern Ireland, were asked to draw two pictures, one about living in Northern Ireland now and another one about living in Northern Ireland before they were born. The children's drawings and their comments shed light into children's own understandings of the peaceful or/and violent nature of the here-and-now and the past of a society coming out of conflict.

In this chapter, the children's data are examined and analysed using different approaches, which are described in Chapter 3. On one hand, the findings of a thematic analysis of the drawings and comments are exposed. On the other hand, the drawings and comments are also examined in terms of the narratives they revealed, and how these might have been influenced by the Northern Ireland school curriculum. Finally, differences and similarities among the children according to gender, age and type of school attended are highlighted, in terms of the themes depicted in their drawings and the 'word clouds' of the transcribed comments they made. A discussion of the findings is also provided. Next chapter focuses on the analysis of the parental questionnaires.

## 2. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis was conducted with the drawings (see Chapter 3). Findings are presented here under the structure of the five main themes extracted from the data: violence, policing, awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity, negative elements, positive elements of peace/hope, and neighbourhood physical elements.

### Violence

Elements of violence, as defined in Chapter 3, appeared in 80 pictures (22% of all pictures), drawn by 70 children (39% of all children). Most of these pictures depicted Northern Ireland's past (n=64; 36% of Picture B), although a few children also depicted

the present as violent (n=16; 9% of Picture A). In total, the most common depiction of violence was violent activities or actions, portrayed in 63 drawings, while negative emotions were depicted in only 20 drawings (see Table 4.1).

*Table 4.1: Frequency of drawings containing different elements of violence*

| | Violence (total) | Instruments of war/violence | Violent/war activities | Negative consequences of violence/war | Negative emotions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture A | 16 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 7 |
| Picture B | 64 | 41 | 50 | 28 | 13 |
| Total | 80 | 48 | 63 | 35 | 20 |

In 12 of the 16 Pictures A depicting violence, the police also featured; and the stories behind them often involved rioting, and throwing different things (e.g. paint bombs or bricks) at the police cars/jeeps. All of the children drawing these pictures attended a school in a very deprived area of Belfast, with seven of them actually attending the same P7 classroom in a controlled school, three were in the same P7 classroom in an all-boys maintained school, and the remaining two children were in a P6 classroom in that same all-boys school. Thus, it could be argued that peers might have had an impact on what the children chose to draw. However, their stories were all different, and some appeared to have actually witnessed the event they drew (Figure 4.1):

*'This is a police land rover. When I was out playing, they were getting bricked in. It was getting bombed, and all the sirens were going. They were taking pictures of the people throwing them, so they can bring them into jail. [And when was that?] A year ago.'* (girl A, controlled school, P7)

*'... somebody was standing at the bus stop, but the bus didn't come, and they started throwing bricks, and people got damaged. [What did they damage?] They damaged a house, and the bus. They put the window through.'* (girl B, controlled school, P7)

In fact, one of the children in that class explained that he had actually been involved himself in that sort of behaviour, as he explains (Figure 4.1):

*'It's a church, and the windows are broken. Me and my friend, we got our names on the wall. We broke all the windows, and there's the police.'* (boy A, controlled school, P7)

*Figure 4.1: Violence in Picture A (examples: Girl A, Girl B, & Boy A)*


The other four children who had depicted violence in their Picture A drew a robbery, a memorial with a soldier, an army base, and a church being set on fire by children. The violent elements most common in the Picture A were violent activities (i.e. rioting, throwing bricks at the police, breaking church windows, throwing bombs, setting the church on fire) (n=13). Not as common were negative emotions (i.e. people crying or frightened because of bomb scares or being robbed, etc) (n=7) and negative consequences (i.e. sirens going; demolished buildings; dead people; etc) (n=7); and instruments of violence/war (n=7). Children explained that these events either happened recently or/and that happened regularly:

*'A couple of weeks ago, (...) there was a bomb scare.'*

*'... there was a bomb scare at the bottom of the road the other night.'*

*'This is the church down my lane, and all the kids keep putting it on fire. ... [And is that often or did it happen once?] No, it happened about five times. [Recently?] Yeah.'*

*'Sometimes it happens like in the band, when the bands are out and all before.'*

Only 10 of the 64 children who represented violence in their Picture B specifically mentioned the “Troubles” (n=7) or a well-known Troubles-related incident (n=3), such as the Shankill bomb, while seven children talked about the World Wars or the Germans invading them or throwing bombs (Figure 4.2):

*‘...when my daddy was born and all, and there was the Troubles, and the cars were burning and people were fighting and all.’* (girl C, maintained school, P6)

*‘... it’s like in the war here, like in the Troubles, and there’s… people and they are from Germany, these ones, and then there’s like killing all people...’* (girl D, controlled school, P7)

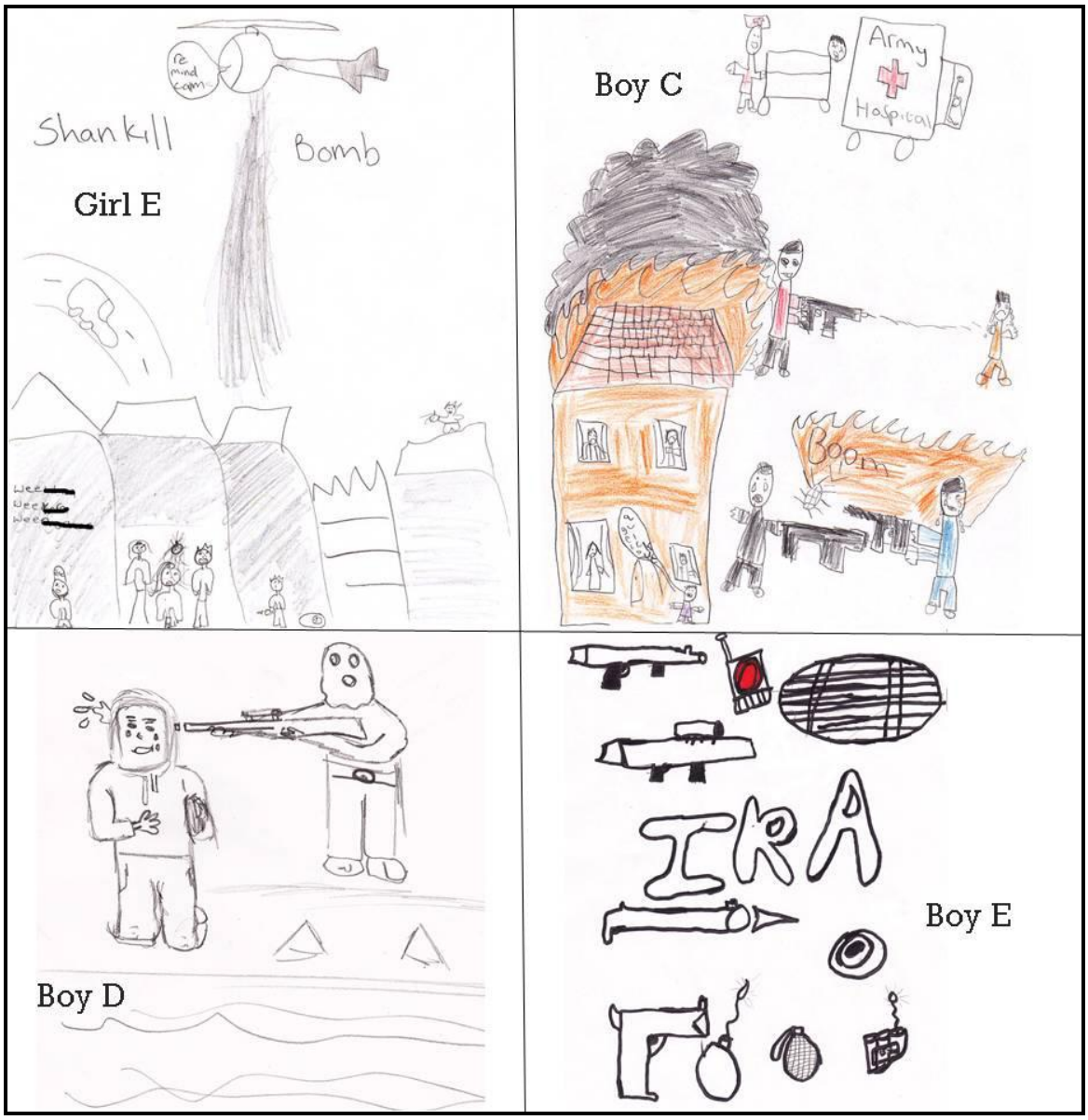
*‘That’s the war [What war?] Whenever you had the war… erm… whenever the Germans hit Belfast.’* (boy B, maintained school, P7)

*Figure 4.2: Violence in Picture B (examples: Girl C, Girl D, & Boy B)*


As shown in the drawing of boy B (Figure 4.2) and the comment of girl D, sometimes WWII and the Troubles were confused and mixed up. Most children, however, did not give a name to the violent events they described, which were varied and involved setting property (cars, churches, and houses) on fire, shootings and fights, bombings, etc. The most common elements of violence in Picture B were violent activities (e.g. ‘killing all people’, fighting, rioting) (n=50), instruments of war/violence (e.g. bombs, ‘plastic bullets and petrol bombs’) (n=41), followed by negative consequences (e.g.

'kids got pulled into their house, because there was all fights'; 'a car all burned up') (n=28), and negative emotions (e.g. 'people being sad') (n=13).

*Figure 4.3: Violence in Picture B (examples: Girl E, Boy C, Boy D, & Boy E)*




Although most children did not talk about how they knew about the 'violent' past in their pictures, for some children, these stories were part of their family history (n=2), and others said that they had been told about them by their parents (n=15) (Figure 4.3).

*'It's the Shankill bomb. There's a helicopter shining light down, and saying 'Remain calm'. There's messages on the wall, and there was a bomb planted in the shop. That's*

*my cousin and their mummy and daddy in the shop and they got blown up.' (girl E, controlled school, P7)*

*'My mum and dad told me, they said that there was like a war, there was bad people and the army. And they said there was all explosions going on.'* (boy C, controlled school, P6).

**Policing**

In total, 27 pictures (7%), drawn by 25 children (14%), depicted policing. Fifteen children (8%) depicted the police in their Picture A. Only three of these children did not draw violence. One of these three children explained that he had drawn a man '*getting chased by the police and he's on the run*', another child drew '*the police going up and down the road*', and the other child drew the police arriving to the scene of a fire. As for Picture B, 12 children (7%) portrayed policing, and violence appeared in most of these pictures (n=9), as police was present in the midst of fighting, being attacked by people throwing things at them (similarly to Pictures A), or searching people.

**Awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity**

*Awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity* was a theme that appeared in 24 drawings (7%), drawn by 22 children (12%). Seven of these (4%) were Picture A and 17 (9%) were Picture B. *Markers of difference* appeared in 20 pictures, while *sectarian or political violence* appeared in 16 (see Table 2). The most common *markers of difference* were flags (n=9), and reference to the two communities (Catholics and Protestants, Republicans, '*the brits'*, two different religions, etc) (n=9) (Figure 4.4):

*'The first picture is a police branch, it's for… it has a Northern Ireland flag'* (boy F, maintained school, P6)

*'I did a church because… like a church could be for Protestants, I thought that it would be more chapels and churches around, because of Protestants have their own church, and Catholics have their own chapel, and I thought that it would be the thing to do, because the Protestants and Catholics have two different religions and have different thoughts.'* (girl F, maintained school, P6)

*Table 4.2: Frequency of drawings containing different elements of 'awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity'*

| | Awareness of sectarianism & community relations/ identity (total) | Markers of difference | Sectarian/political violence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Picture A | 7 | 7 | 2 |
| Picture B | 17 | 13 | 14 |
| Total | 24 | 20 | 16 |

Three girls also mentioned the parades and bands on the 12th of July, while two girls made reference to the peace walls (Figure 4.4):

*'That's people building a bricked wall to separate our people from the Catholics. That's people building it, a big wall.'* (girl G, controlled school, P7)

*'... the road at night, and the streets, with all the bunting up from the parades...'* (girl H, controlled school, P6)

Twelve children talked and drew about the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the pictures regarding the past (Picture B) (Figure 4.5). They were all boys going to the same single-sex maintained school, and only one of them was in P6, while the rest were all in the same P7 class:

*'This is ... when the war was going on. It was the IRA versus the British army.'* (boy G, maintained school, P7)

*'That's the IRA. They were just running around killing people for no reason.'* (boy H, maintained school, P7)

*'It's a British trying to shoot somebody, and then an IRA person just hitting him on the head.'* (boy J, maintained school, P6)

*Figure 4.4: Markers of difference (examples: Boy F, Girl F, Girl G, & Girl H)*

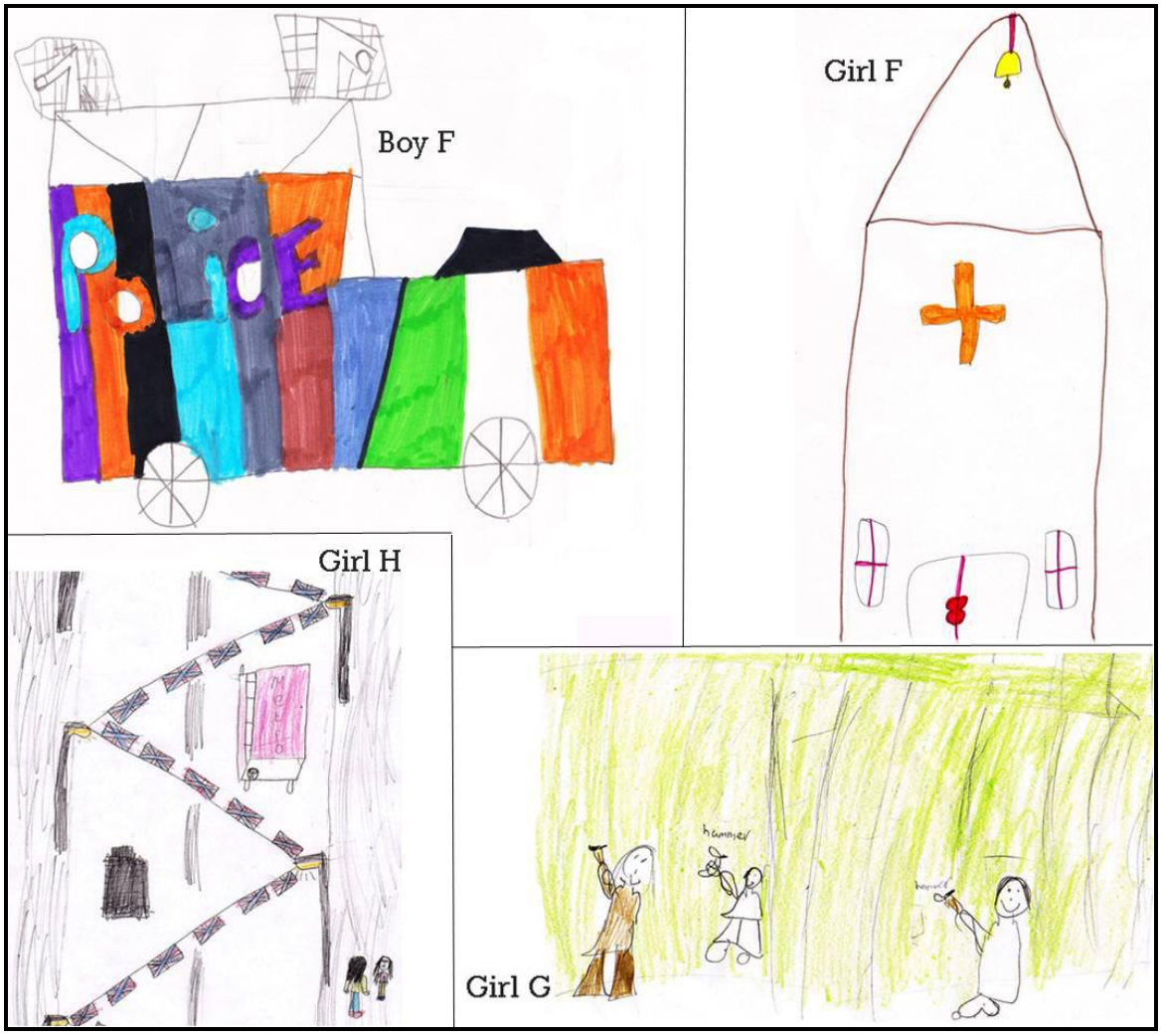
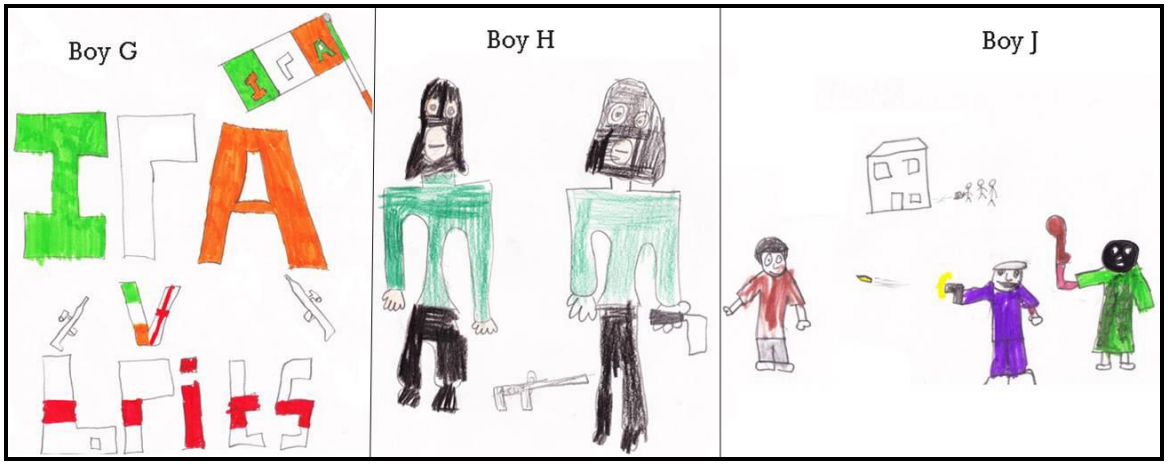



*Figure 4.5: References to paramilitary groups (examples: Boy G, Boy H, & Boy J)*



**Negative elements**

*Negative elements*, other than violence, were found in 51 drawings (14%), drawn by 47 children (26%). Most of the negative elements appeared in pictures about the past. The most common negative elements were: *accidents, death and illness*, featuring in 20 pictures; *hardship, poverty and unfairness*, appearing in 14 pictures; *negative emotions*, in 11; and *negative actions or activities* were depicted in 10 drawings (see Table 4.3).

*Table 4.3: Frequency of drawings containing different 'negative elements'*

| | Negative elements (total) | Accidents, death & illness | Hardship, poverty & unfairness | Negative actions | Negative emotions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture A | 18 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| Picture B | 33 | 16 | 12 | 3 | 9 |
| Total | 51 | 20 | 14 | 10 | 11 |

The most common negative elements that were represented in Picture A ('now') were *negative actions/activities* (n=7) and *rubbish/litter* (n=7), and not as common were *graffiti* (n=4) and *accidents, death and illness* (n=4). Concerns about litter being present in their neighbourhoods were voiced by three girls in the same P6 classroom in a single-sex maintained school, three girls in the same P7 classroom in a controlled school, and one P7 girl in the integrated school (Figure 4.6):

*'... I did rubbish beside bins, because if you are ever walking around in like the town, you see people throwing rubbish just at beside of the bin, and not putting it in the bin, so why not people just put it in the bin, instead of just setting it just right beside it. It's just like living in a dump.'* (girl J, maintained school, P6)

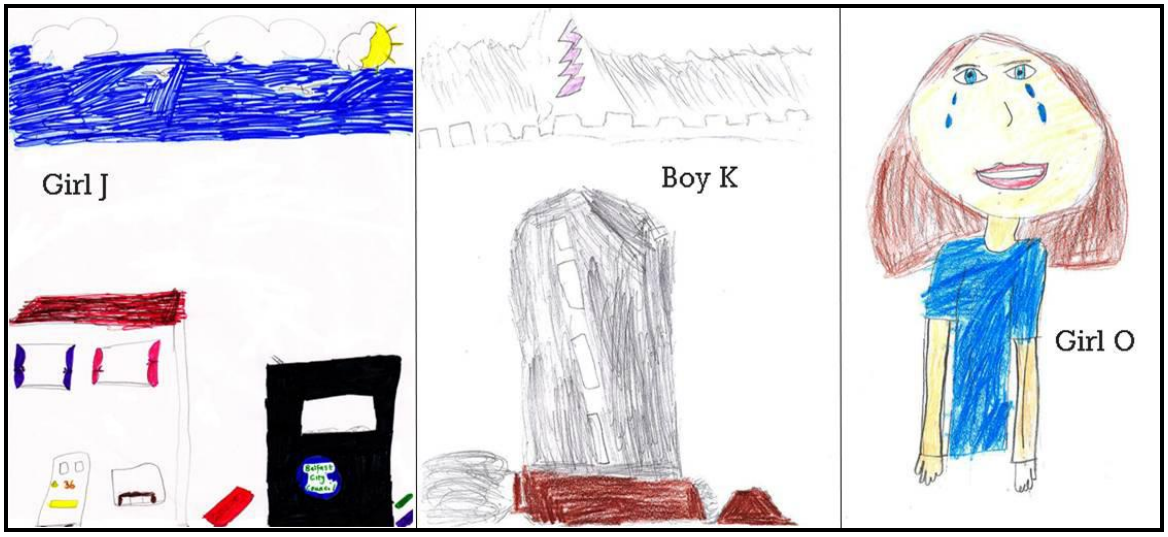
*Negative actions* in the present times comprised dropping litter, being chased by the police, looking for drugs, writing names on walls, and polluting. As for *accidents, death and illness*, a girl talked about a health problem that she had herself (i.e. asthma) while a boy talked about a health problem a friend had (i.e. diabetes), and two others talked about accidents, one that happened to the library that got caught on fire, and the other one being a potential accident related to litter:

*'There's all rubbish lying around parks and all, there's trees and there's a swing. And people falling on glass can get hurt, that's the way we're living now, so it is.'* (girl K, controlled school, P7)

As for Picture B, 12 children represented the Titanic in their pictures on the past, which was categorised as *accidents, death and illness*. Three of them attended the same P6 classroom in an all-boys maintained school, and nine attended the same P7 classroom in a controlled school. Also, four other children described other kinds of accidents and an illness that happened in the past (i.e. floods, a tree falling down on a road, falling off a wall, and dying of cancer) (Figure 4.6):

*'My mum said that they had a tree, and then the tree fell over. And then there's a road going up to the town, and… they couldn't go by there for a month because... And then they had to go to this wee shop, and they didn't really sell so much food, so then they were kind of hungry, really starving*...' (boy K, integrated school, P7)

*Figure 4.6: Negative elements (examples: Girl J, Boy K, & Girl O)*




Children often understood the past (Picture B) as being times of hardship and poverty, and when unfair actions/events occurred (n=14):

*'People were going to the shop, but there was no chocolate.'* (girl L, maintained school, P7)

*'... You couldn't go to school if you were poor. ....'* (girl M, integrated school, P7)

*'... because I thought it would just be like all dark and dull because... it was back in the olden days, and they were all wearing black, but I didn't get time to colour.'* (girl N, controlled school, P6)

Images of children sweeping chimneys (n=3) were included in the category of *hardship, poverty and unfairness*. It is important to mention here that the Titanic and Victorian times (involving children sweeping chimneys and forced to work) are part of the curriculum at Year 6 (P6) in all Northern Irish schools. *Negative emotions* were another of the most common codes in Picture B (n=9). Children who depicted this theme talked about feelings of sadness, fear, or not having a good time (Figure 4.6):

*'Living in Northern Ireland before I was born erm... I feel sad about the bad things that happened to my parents and people that they knew.'* (girl O, integrated school, P6)

**Positive elements of peace/hope**

The vast majority of children (n=164; 92%) depicted *positive elements of peace/hope* in their drawings (n=255; 71%). Most of these elements appeared in Picture A (see Table 4.4). These images were extremely varied, and included: *negation of war or violence* (i.e. images of quietness/tranquillity, child's house or school, schools and play parks, and wealth) (n=121); *close social network* (i.e. family and friends) (n=97); *nature* (e.g. sun, grass, forests, fields, flowers, etc) (n=119); *positive actions* (e.g. playing, being nice or helping others, going for walks, swimming, etc) (n=115); and *positive emotions* (e.g. smiling, being happy, etc) (n=105). Only four children specifically referred to peace or of being peaceful when describing their Pictures A.

*Table 4.4: Frequency of drawings containing different 'positive elements of peace/hope'*

| | Positive elements (total) | Negation of war/violence | Close social network | Nature | Positive actions | Positive emotions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture A | 157 | 85 | 51 | 79 | 81 | 75 |
| Picture B | 98 | 36 | 46 | 41 | 34 | 30 |
| Total | 255 | 121 | 97 | 120 | 115 | 105 |

In Picture A, many children drew *positive actions or activities* (n=81), which mainly included play or fun activities, such as playing (n=43), swimming (n=6), and going for walks (n=5), but also being nice/helping other people (n=3). With regard to playing, there were gender differences, as football was mentioned by 17 boys and one girl, while skipping was depicted by three girls and no boys. Similarly, shopping was portrayed only by girls (n=5). These were activities that the children enjoyed, or regularly/recently took part in (Figure 4.7):

*'Well, I did it because I like living in Northern Ireland, and my favourite thing to do really is playing football. So, I drew… football.'* (boy L, integrated school, P7)

The code of *negation of war/violence* was also present in many Pictures A (n=85), and mostly consisted of images of the child's house (n=44), play parks (n=19), schools (n=16), and images of quietness and tranquillity (n=7) (Figure 4.7).

'*Well, I think Northern Ireland is very quiet and near the sea, and it's got lots of new technology and stuff, so it's very good.'* (girl P, integrated school, P6)

*'This is my picture of my house. I drew it because I've lived in it for 10 years. That's the wall outside my house. That's a shed in the front garden where I keep my motorbike in. And it's raining in the picture, because it always rains in Belfast.'* (boy M, controlled school, P7)

*Figure 4.7: Positive elements of peace/hope (examples: Boy L, Girl P, and Boy M)*


*Nature* appeared in a large number of Pictures A (n=79), and it usually included the sun, flowers, fields, mountains, etc. Other common codes were *positive emotions* (n=75), such as images of people smiling, being happy, or the reference of liking something depicted in the picture; and the child's *close social network* (n=51), which included family (n=22), especially parents (n=12) and siblings (n=6), and friends (n=33).

In Picture B, the most common theme was *close social network* (n=46), in particular family (friends only appearing in 5 of the pictures), as most of the children depicted the experiences of their parents and grandparents, when considering life in Northern Ireland in the past. Another code that was particular common was *nature* (n=41). The code *negation of war/violence* appeared in 36 pictures, and it included images of past family homes (n=19), schools (n=7) and quietness/tranquillity (n=6), as well as perceptions that it was all the same as it is now (the houses, cars, churches, etc) (n=4). Positive actions (n=34), in particular playing (n=13), and positive emotions (n=30) also appeared in some pictures B.

**Neighbourhood physical characteristics**

Many children (n=109; 61%) drew physical elements of their own neighbourhoods or further afield, that is houses (excluding their own, as this was coded under positive elements of peace/hope), streets and roads, shops, landmarks like the Giant's Causeway or the Belfast 'big wheel', churches, paths/walkways and other buildings.

These elements appeared in 147 pictures (41%), 69 pictures A and 78 pictures B (see Table 4.5).

*Table 4.5: Frequency of drawings containing different 'neighbourhood physical elements'*

| | Physical elements (total) | houses | Churches | landmarks | Leisure centres | Streets/ roads | Shops |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture A | 69 | 25 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 24 | 11 |
| Picture B | 78 | 51 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 26 | 16 |
| Total | 147 | 76 | 9 | 14 | 7 | 50 | 27 |

Especially in the pictures about the present, they identified with Northern Irish local landmarks, which they had nearby, such as the Giant's Causeway up in the North coast (n=3) where the integrated school was located, or the Belfast 'big wheel' (n=8) and Harland and Wolff cranes in the city of Belfast (n=3) (Figure 4.8):

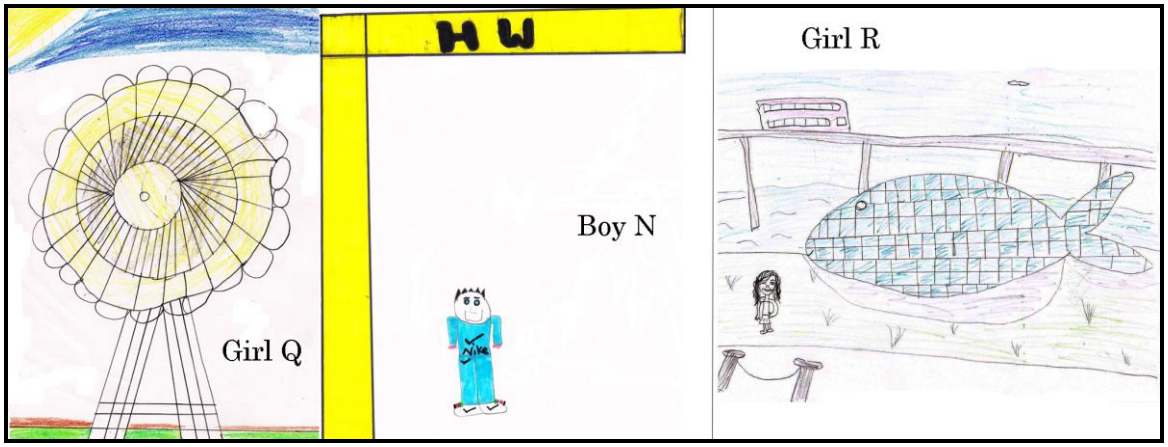
*"This is the Belfast eye, and it's like… we go downtown and you can get on it. So you have to be given a token and then, you can get on it, and you can see the whole of Belfast."* (girl Q, maintained school, P6)

*"I came out of the cinema, and then I was standing under Harland and Wolff, getting my picture taken."* (boy N, maintained school, P6)

*"Well, this is down at the Lagan, and that's the big fish, and that's me beside the big fish. And there's the pink buses, that I like getting on, a double-decker. And the sea is all green and blue."* (girl R, controlled school, P6)

Houses, other than their own, were present in a good number of pictures (n=76), especially in pictures B (n=51). Usually, they were surrounded by other various elements, and sometimes illustrated differences between how houses are now and how they were in the past. The next most common element within this theme was 'streets and roads', which appeared in 50 pictures. These were either particular streets and roads familiar to them, or generic ones. Shops also appeared in a number of pictures (n=27), but churches only appeared in a few (n=9).

*Figure 4.8: Neighbourhood physical elements (examples: Girl Q, Boy N, and Girl R)*




### 3. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

In some of the drawings, mainly those of children attending the integrated school, the present and the past seemed to be contrasted and linked. Northern Ireland in the present was often described as a good place to live in (sometimes, even better than it was in the past) by boys and girls in all the participating schools. To be precise, Northern Ireland in the present (or living in Northern Ireland) was described as: good and fair (n=9), happy (n=9), fun (n=6), nice (n=5), quiet and peaceful (n=4), technological (n=2) and great (n=1); but also polluting and with 'rubbish lying around' (n=5), sometimes scary or not good (n=2). In contrast, Northern Ireland in the past was described as: not good and unfair (n=10), scary (n=4) poor (n=3), 'dark and dull' (n=1) and old-fashioned (n=1); but also clean (n=1). Sometimes, the "now" and the "before" was qualitatively compared. In fact, nine children in the integrated school (eight in Year 7 and one in Year 6) specifically "qualitatively" compared the past with the present. Most of these (n=8) felt that living in Northern Ireland now was better than it was in the past (see Figure 4.9), and only one seemed to suggest that in the past, it was better, because of having more fields and less pollution. Four children in the same class in one of the controlled schools, when comparing the past with the present, explained that they did not know how it was like but that it was probably all similar to what it is like now (see Figure 4.10).

*Figure 4.9: Comparing the present with the past (example: Girl M)*

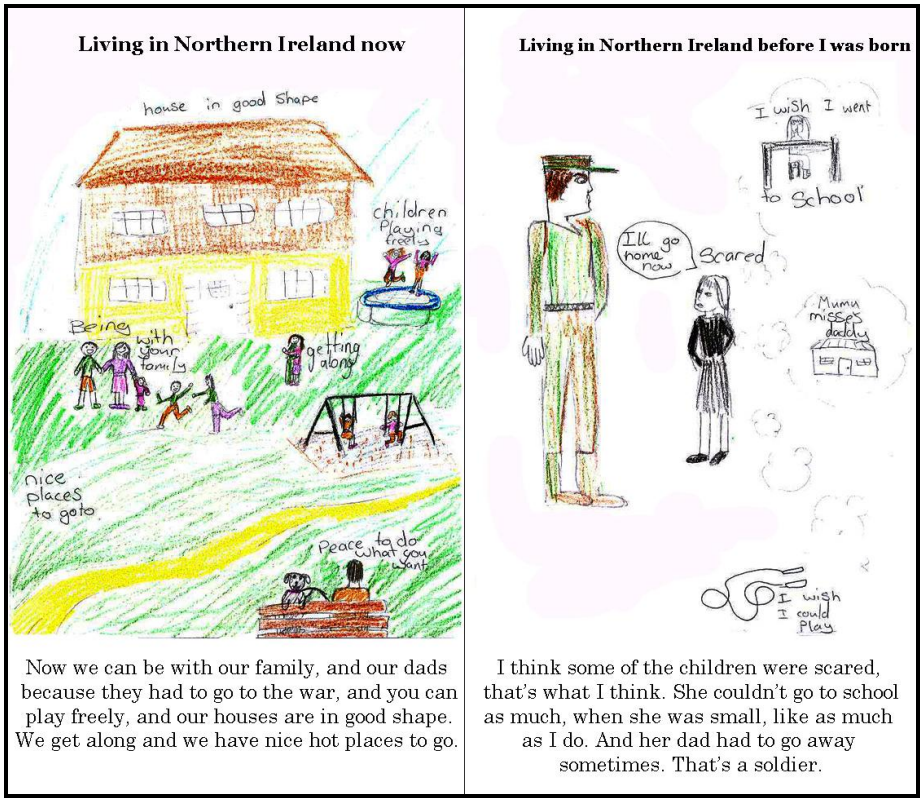
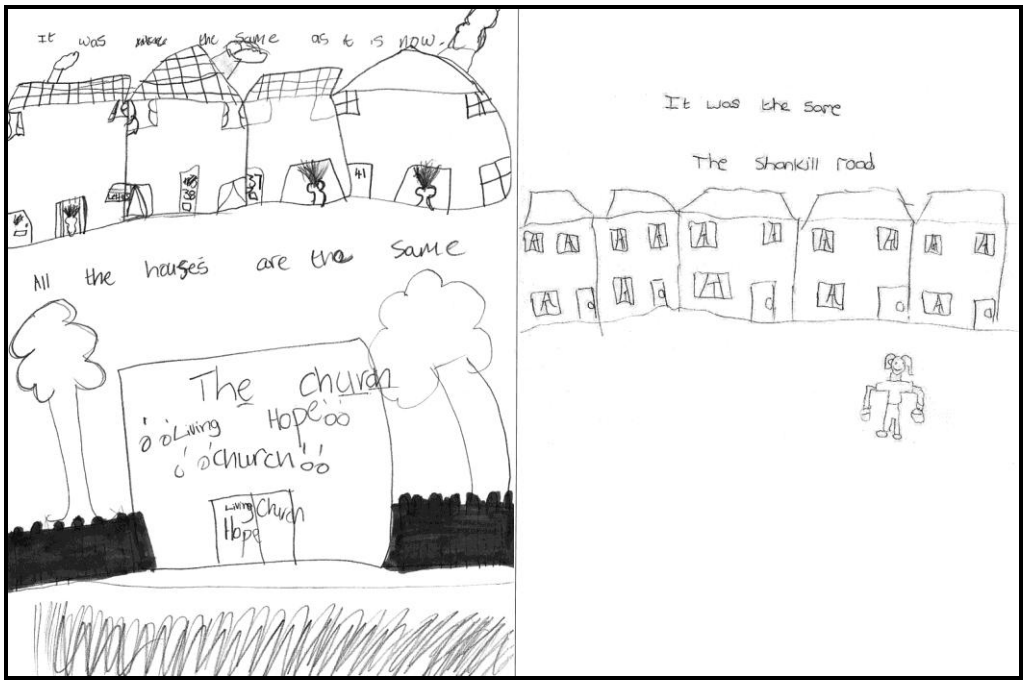



*Figure 4.10: The past as 'the same' as the present (girls in Year 7 controlled school)*



When explaining the drawings, some children (n=75) told stories that had happened to them, had witnessed, or had been told. Stories about the present were told by 26 children, most of which were own recent experiences (n=11) (Figure 4.11):

*"It's my friends and my cousins at the cinema, watching Hannah Montana. [Did you not go?] Yeah, they invited me to their friend's birthday party so I said that I'd like to go, to watch Hannah Montana, because there wasn't other movies on that I wanted to watch. [And did you enjoy it?] Yes, it's very good."* (girl S, maintained school, P7).

Other stories consisted of witnessing different events (n=7), and a few were recent local news (n=4):

*"When I was out playing, they [the police] were getting bricked in. It was getting bombed, and all the sirens were going. They were taking pictures of the people throwing them, so they can bring them into jail."* (girl A, controlled school, P7) (see Figure 4.1)

*"It was when there was a fire up near the library, and that's a factory, and got caught on the library. The fire was in the factory first, and that's the police coming."* (girl T, controlled school, P7).

Fifty-seven children told stories on the past. Most of these children specify that they had been told by their parents (n=27), while other accounts appeared to be family stories (n=13):

*"Well, my mum always told me that she used to live beside the sea, and she used to go down by the rocks and play pirates in the sea at the rocks."* (girl P, integrated school, P6).

*Figure 4.11: Stories (examples: Girl S, Girl T & Girl P)*


However, children gained their information on the past not only from their parents. For instance, one girl in a controlled school in P7 explained how a museum had inspired her to draw her picture on the past:

*'I just drew like a wee village with… a workshop, a shoe shop, a bike shop, and a couple of wee houses and all, with a carriage. Well, I've been to the wee museum, and I thought, well that was in the olden days and… a school down the road, so… I thought that would be alright to draw.'*

## 4. HISTORY AND THE GENERAL CURRICULUM IN THE DRAWINGS

When asked to draw about what it was like to grow up in Northern Ireland for their parents/grandparents, some children appeared to represent what they had learnt as local history at school. The document setting out the requirements of the Revised Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum gives us some clues to understand what the children chose to draw. This section explores how the school curriculum influenced the study participants' understandings of their country's past.

In the document setting up the curriculum, in the section on 'The World Around Us', a few items were specified which reflected some of the children's drawings. These were:

1. Different buildings, such as homes, and types of transport now and in the past;
2. Technological change;

3. Effects of historical events, specifically mentioned were the World Wars;
4. Life at a particular time, specifically mentioned was life in the Victorian Times; and
5. An aspect of the local or wider community over a short period of time, and the example mentioned here was the story of the Titanic.

**Different buildings/types of transport and technological change**

These topics appeared in a number of pictures and were especially apparent in some of the children's comments. Some children explained how things, particularly buildings and types of transport, were different in the past than they are now (Figure 4.12):

*"I drew mummy's house, and about the way the houses were when my mummy was like that. They are more modernised now.* ***[They were different?]*** *Yeah, they were just bricks. They were not painted or anything".* (girl U, maintained school, P6)

*'It's about how the houses were different then than now. This one is with all the cars and smaller houses, now.'* (girl V, integrated school, P6)

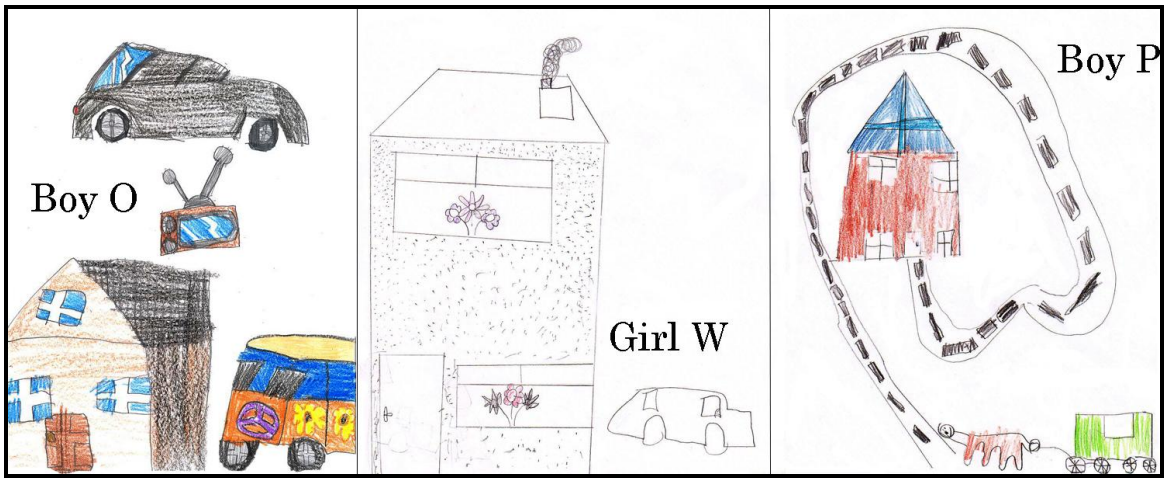
*'I think probably before I was born, there were old TVs and old cars. That's how it used to be our house.'* (boy O, integrated school, P7)

*'Now they have more of technology, but back in the olden days, it's more of… stuff that had to be carved by hand. But we have cars and all now, which they didn't back then. They had horses and carriages.'* (girl W, controlled school, P6)

In fact, in terms of transport, six children mentioned carriages and 'horse and carts' as being used in the past (Figure 4.12):

*'That's how it was in the olden days, when you were going on a cart.'* (boy P, controlled school, P6)

*Figure 4.12: Buildings and transport now and in the past (examples: Boy O, Girl W & Boy P)*




**Examples of topics specifically mentioned in the curriculum: World Wars, Victorian times and the Titanic**

The World Wars were also present in eight pictures of the past. Germans, bombs and images related to the Belfast blitz appeared in most of these pictures:

*'Before I was born, there was German planes flying over and throwing bombs, and people were staying in air-raid shelters and all, and sometimes they got caught on fire, and they tried to cover it up with grass, so people would think that's just a mountain thing with grass all over it.'* (girl K, controlled school, P7)

A few children illustrated life in the Victorian times by representing children sweeping chimneys, as it appears that the fact that children had to work in those times was emphasised in the class (as explained by one teacher of a participating P6 class):

*'This is like ages and ages ago, whenever they used to have chimney sweepers, and there's a wee boy, chimney sweeping and there's just pictures of houses...'* (girl X, controlled school, P7)

Finally, as previously mentioned (when describing the negative elements node), the story of the Titanic was mentioned by 12 children, within two of the classrooms that took part in the study:

*'This one is the Titanic, which was originally built in Belfast. And… unfortunately it sank on the 22nd of August 1912. [And is that the iceberg?] Yeah, it crashed into an iceberg.'* (girl Y, controlled school, P7)

*Figure 4.13: Topics mentioned in the curriculum document (examples: Girl K, Girl X & Girl Y)*


## 5. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES AMONG GROUPS OF CHILDREN

In this section, the differences and similarities among boys and girls, younger and older children, and children attending different types of schools are examined, in terms of the themes appearing in their pictures, but also the specific words appearing in their explanations of the drawings through the use of word clouds (for a description of word clouds, see Chapter 3).

### Gender differences/similarities

Significant differences were found between boys and girls, in terms of the themes that appeared in their drawings, especially regarding violence, policing, positive elements of peace/hope, and negative elements (see Tables 4.6 – 4.8), but not neighbourhood physical elements; however, similarities among them were also found.

In terms of gender tendencies when drawing pictures featuring violence, boys' drawings of violence tended to depict more violent/war activities and instruments, rather than negative emotions and consequences of the violence; whereas girls'

pictures of violence, apart from violent activities and war instruments, also depicted negative consequences and emotions. As for significant differences within this particular theme, a higher proportion of boys depicted violence in one or both of their pictures compared to girls (49% vs. 32%, p< 0.05), particularly in picture B (47% vs. 28%, p<0.05), and in terms of violent/war activities (41% vs. 24.5%, p<0.05) (Table 4.6).

However, similarities also should be noted. For instance, the same number of boys and girls drew violence in Picture A: eight girls (7.5% of the girls); and eight boys (11% of the boys); and the same proportion of boys and girls drew negative emotions (resulting from the violence): seven boys (10%); and 11 girls (10%) (Table 4.6).

As for the category of *policing*, a higher proportion of boys depicted this theme in their drawings compared to girls (20% vs. 9%, p< 0.05). Although not significant due to small numbers, there were also differences in terms of the picture in which policing featured. *Policing* appeared in seven Pictures A and four Pictures B drawn by girls, whereas boys portrayed this theme in the same amount of Pictures A (n=8) and B (n=8) (Table 4.6).

*Table 4.6: Violence and policing themes among gender groups*

| | Girls | | Boys | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Violence * | 34 | 32 | 36 | 49 | 70 | 39 |
| Viol. Picture A | 8 | 7.5 | 8 | 11 | 16 | 9 |
| Viol. Picture B* | 30 | 28 | 34 | 47 | 64 | 36 |
| Activities * | 26 | 24.5 | 30 | 41 | 56 | 31 |
| Instruments [a] | 20 | 19 | 23 | 31.5 | 43 | 24 |
| Consequences | 21 | 20 | 11 | 15 | 32 | 18 |
| Emotions | 11 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 18 | 10 |
| Policing * | 10 | 9 | 15 | 20.5 | 25 | 14 |
| Pol. Picture A | 7 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 8 |
| Pol. Picture B[a] | 4 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 7 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

Similar to the codes *violence* and *policing*, a higher proportion of boys than girls made reference to *awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity* in one or both drawings (19% vs. 7%, $p<0.05$), particularly in Picture B (18% vs. 4%, $p<0.01$). However, even though this is not significant because of the small numbers, more girls (n=5) than boys (n=2) represented *awareness of sectarianism* in Picture A (Table 4.7). All of the girls who portrayed this theme in either or both pictures portrayed *markers of difference*, and only three of them depicted *sectarian/political violence*.

A larger proportion of girls than boys (32% vs. 18%, $p<0.05$) depicted *negative elements* (other than violence) in their pictures, especially in picture A (13% vs. 5%, $p<0.1$) (Table 4.7), although in picture B, the percentages were closer with only a 6% difference.

*Table 4.7: 'Awareness of sectarianism' and 'negative elements' themes among gender groups*

| | Girls | | Boys | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Awareness of sect.* | 8 | 7.5 | 14 | 19 | 22 | 12 |
| Aw. Picture A | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Aw. Picture B ** | 4 | 4 | 13 | 18 | 17 | 9.5 |
| Negative elements* | 34 | 32 | 13 | 18 | 47 | 26 |
| Neg. Picture A [a] | 14 | 13 | 4 | 5.5 | 18 | 10 |
| Neg. Picture B | 22 | 21 | 11 | 15 | 33 | 18 |

* Significant difference, $p<0.05$
** Significant difference, $p<0.01$
[a] Near significant difference, $p<0.1$

*Table 4.8: 'Positive elements of peace/hope' themes among gender groups*

| | Girls | | Boys | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Positive elements * | 101 | 95 | 63 | 86 | 164 | 92 |
| Positive. Picture A [a] | 97 | 91.5 | 60 | 82 | 157 | 88 |
| Positive. Picture B** | 70 | 66 | 28 | 38 | 98 | 55 |
| Negation of war ** | 69 | 65 | 31 | 42.5 | 100 | 56 |
| House (in neg.war) | 25 | 24 | 20 | 27 | 45 | 25 |
| Social network ** | 56 | 53 | 21 | 29 | 77 | 43 |
| Nature ** | 68 | 64 | 26 | 36 | 94 | 52.5 |
| Positive actions | 60 | 57 | 38 | 52 | 98 | 55 |
| Positive emotions * | 61 | 57.5 | 28 | 38 | 89 | 50 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

A significantly larger percentage of girls than boys portrayed positive elements of peace/hope (95% vs. 86%, p<0.05), especially in Picture B (66% vs. 38%, p<0.01). Other statistically significant differences among girls and boys were found regarding: nature (64% vs. 36%, p<0.01); close social network (i.e. friends and family) (53% vs. 29%, p<0.01); positive emotions (57% vs. 38%, p<0.05); and negation of war/violence (65% vs. 42%, p<0.05). However, there were similarities in that the vast majority of boys and girls depicted positive elements of peace/hope, especially in picture A (91% of girls and 82% of boys), and a very similar percentage of boys and girls portrayed positive actions in their pictures (especially 'playing football' in the case of boys) (57% of girls and 52% of boys) and their own houses (24% of the girls and 27% of the boys) (Table 4.8).

Finally, there were also significant differences in terms of the portrayal of 'neighbourhood physical elements'. More girls than boys depicted this theme in their pictures (69% vs. 49%, p<0.01), particularly in Picture B (51% vs. 33%, p<0.05); and more girls than boys drew houses (47% vs. 23%, p<0.01). However, a similar percentage portrayed streets and roads (25.5% of girls and 19% of boys).

*Table 4.9: 'Neighbourhood physical elements' themes among gender groups*

| | Girls | | Boys | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Physical elements** | 73 | 69 | 36 | 49 | 109 | 61 |
| Phys.el. Picture A | 44 | 41.5 | 25 | 34 | 69 | 38.5 |
| Phys.el. Picture B* | 54 | 51 | 24 | 33 | 78 | 44 |
| Houses** | 50 | 47 | 17 | 23 | 67 | 37 |
| Streets/roads | 27 | 25.5 | 14 | 19 | 41 | 23 |
| Shops | 18 | 17 | 7 | 10 | 25 | 14 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

In terms of the words and concepts used in the children's comments of the pictures depicting the present (Picture A), boys and girls used similar and distinct concepts (Figures 4.14 and 4.15). Words that both boys and girls used to describe their pictures on the present were: house, playing, people, picture, friend, park, school, draw/drew, and Belfast. Words that only boys used were: football, basketball, police and swimming; whereas only girls used the following words: family, fishing, going, walking and shopping.

*Figure 4.14: Word cloud of boys' Picture A*

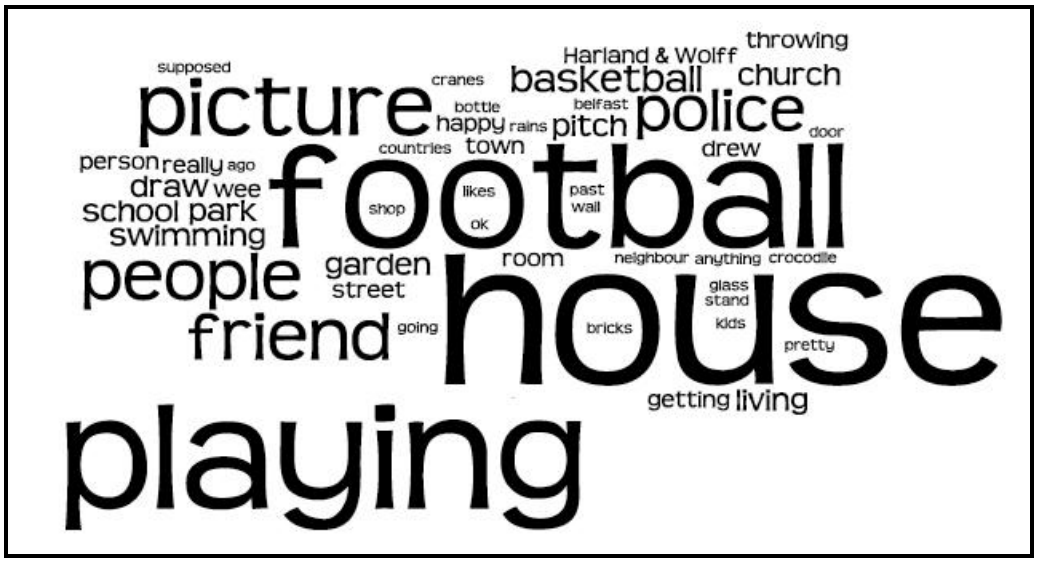
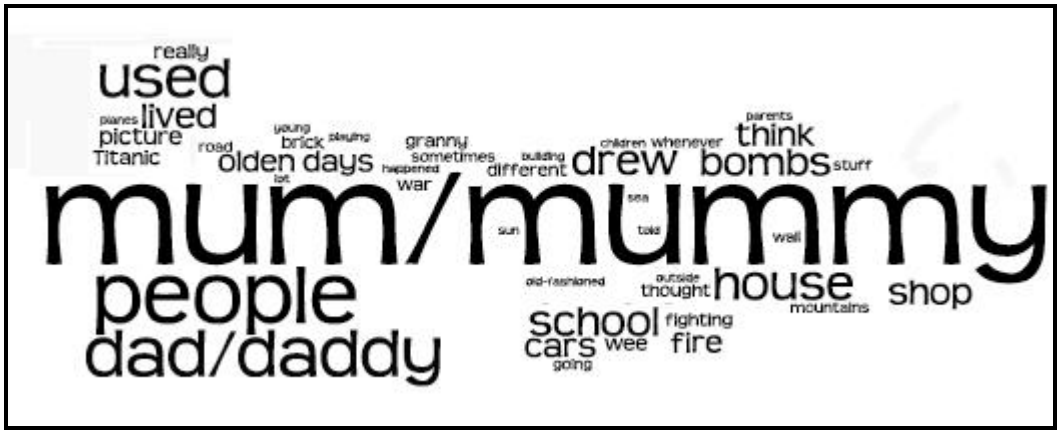


*Figure 4.15: Word cloud of girls' Picture A*


Similarly, boys and girls used the same and also different words to describe their pictures of the recent past of Northern Ireland (Figures 4.16 and 4.17). Boys and girls used words like: mum/mummy and dad/daddy, people, house, car/s, shop, bombs, fight/fighting and Titanic. However, boys also used words, such as: army, shooting, war, Troubles, IRA and British/Brits; and girls used words, such as: school and granny.

*Figure 4.16: Word cloud of boys' Picture B*

*Figure 4.17: Word cloud of girls' picture B*




**Age differences/similarities**

Significant differences and similarities were also found between children in P6 and children in P7 classes, in terms of the themes that appeared in their drawings (see Tables 4.10-4.13).

In terms of the code 'violence', a higher proportion of older children (i.e. attending P7 classes) than younger children (i.e. attending P6 classes) portrayed violence in one or both of the pictures (48% vs. 31%, $p<0.05$), especially instruments of violence/war (32% vs. 16.5%, $p<0.05$). The differences were starker in Picture A, where a smaller percentage of children in P6 portrayed violence, compared to children in P7 (4% vs. 14%, $p<0.05$), but in Picture B, the differences were only near significant (30% vs. 42%, $p<0.1$).

*Table 4.10: Violence and policing themes among age groups*

| | P6 | | P7 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Violence * | 28 | 31 | 42 | 48 | 70 | 39 |
| Viol. Picture A* | 4 | 4 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 9 |
| Viol. Picture B[a] | 27 | 30 | 37 | 42 | 64 | 36 |
| Activities | 24 | 26 | 32 | 36 | 56 | 31 |
| Instruments * | 15 | 16.5 | 28 | 32 | 43 | 24 |
| Consequences[a] | 12 | 13 | 20 | 23 | 32 | 18 |
| Emotions | 6 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 18 | 10 |
| Policing | 9 | 10 | 16 | 18 | 25 | 14 |
| Pol. Picture A* | 3 | 3 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 8 |
| Pol. Picture B | 7 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 7 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

As for policing, more P7 children than P6 children represented *policing* (18% vs. 10%) in their pictures, but this difference was not statistically significant. However, *policing* in the present (Picture A) was significantly more common in the drawings of P7 than those of P6 children (14% vs. 3%, p<0.05). In Picture B, a very similar number of P6 children (n=7) and P7 children (n=5) depicted this theme.

*Table 4.11: 'Awareness of sectarianism' and 'negative elements' themes among age groups*

| | P6 | | P7 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Awareness of sect [a] | 7 | 8 | 15 | 17 | 22 | 12 |
| Aw. Picture A | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4.5 | 7 | 4 |
| Aw. Picture B* | 4 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 9.5 |
| Negative elements** | 15 | 16.5 | 32 | 36 | 47 | 26 |
| Neg. Picture A | 6 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 18 | 10 |
| Neg. Picture B** | 10 | 11 | 23 | 26 | 33 | 18 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

In terms of *awareness of sectarianism and community/relations identity*, a near significant difference was found, whereby a larger proportion of P7 children than P6 children portrayed this theme in one/both drawing/s (17% vs. 8%, p=0.057). In Picture B, a significantly lower proportion of children attending P6 than those attending P7 depicted this theme (4% vs. 15%, p<0.05).

As for negative elements (other than violence), a higher percentage of P7 than P6 children (36% vs. 17%, p<0.01) depicted this theme in their pictures, especially in Picture B (26% vs. 11%, p<0.01).

As for positive elements, there were barely any age differences regarding the occurrence of this category, but a larger percentage of children in P6 than children in P7 tended to draw their own house (34% vs. 16%, p<0.01), whereas a higher proportion of children in P7 than children in P6 included positive emotions (58% vs. 42%, p<0.05), and drew positive actions, such as children playing (67% vs. 43%, p<0.01) (Table 4.12).

*Table 4.12: 'Positive elements of peace/hope' themes among age groups*

| | P6 | | P7 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Positive elements | 82 | 90 | 82 | 93 | 164 | 92 |
| Positive. Picture A | 81 | 89 | 76 | 86 | 157 | 88 |
| Positive. Picture B | 52 | 57 | 46 | 52 | 98 | 55 |
| Negation of war | 52 | 57 | 48 | 54.5 | 100 | 56 |
| House (in neg.war)** | 31 | 34 | 14 | 16 | 45 | 25 |
| Social network | 37 | 41 | 40 | 46 | 77 | 43 |
| Nature | 43 | 47 | 51 | 58 | 94 | 52.5 |
| Positive actions ** | 39 | 43 | 59 | 67 | 98 | 55 |
| Positive emotions * | 38 | 42 | 51 | 58 | 89 | 50 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

*Table 4.13: 'Neighbourhood physical elements' themes among age groups*

| | P6 | | P7 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Physical elements | 58 | 64 | 51 | 58 | 109 | 61 |
| Phys.el. Picture A | 35 | 38.5 | 34 | 39 | 69 | 38.5 |
| Phys.el. Picture B | 43 | 47 | 35 | 40 | 78 | 44 |
| Houses | 35 | 38.5 | 32 | 36 | 67 | 37 |
| Streets/roads | 23 | 25 | 18 | 20.5 | 41 | 23 |
| Shops | 10 | 11 | 15 | 17 | 25 | 14 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

There were no statistically significant age differences in terms of neighbourhood elements (Table 4.13).

Figures 4.18-4.19 illustrate differences and similarities in the words P6 and P7 children used in the different comments they made about their picture A. When describing their drawings on their present lives, children in both age groups used the following words: house, people, playing, picture, football and school. However, there were also some differences, as P6 children also used words, such as rubbish, fishing, street, cars and garden and P7 children used other words, like happy, town, church, bricks, smiles and swimming.

*Figure 4.18: Word cloud of P6 children's Picture A*

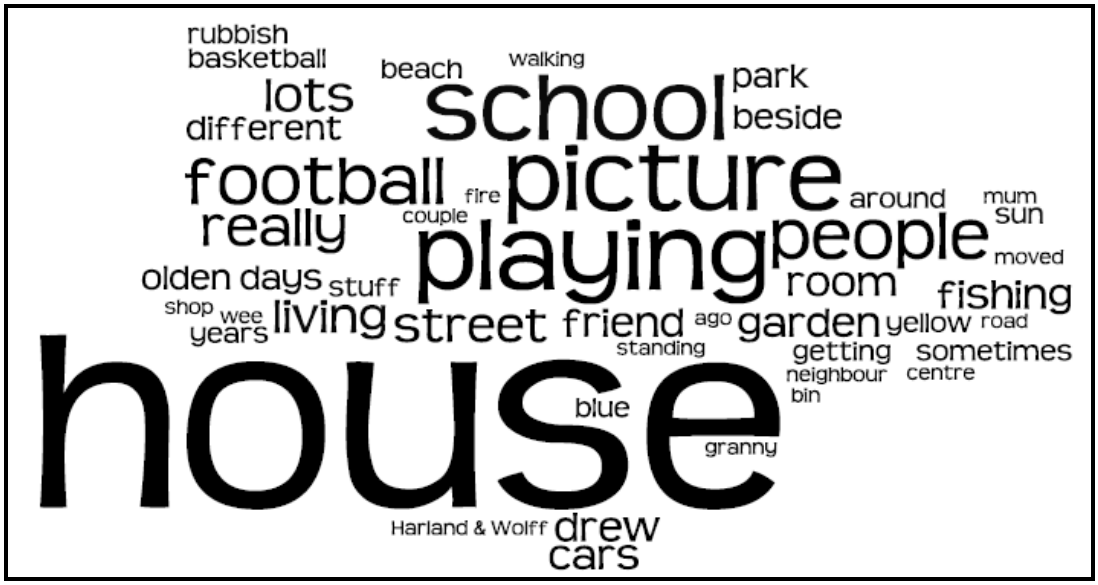



*Figure 4.19: Word cloud of P7 children's Picture A*


Differences and similarities can be also found in the words children in P6 and P7 classes used when describing their pictures B, as shown in the word clouds of Figures 4.20 and 4.21. Although children in both age groups used words such as mum/mummy and dad/daddy, fight/fighting, and bomb/s, children in P7 classes used words like IRA and army whereas children in P6 classes used the word Troubles and shoot/shot. The Titanic was mentioned more often by children in P7 than in P6.

*Figure 4.20: Word cloud of P6 children's Picture B*

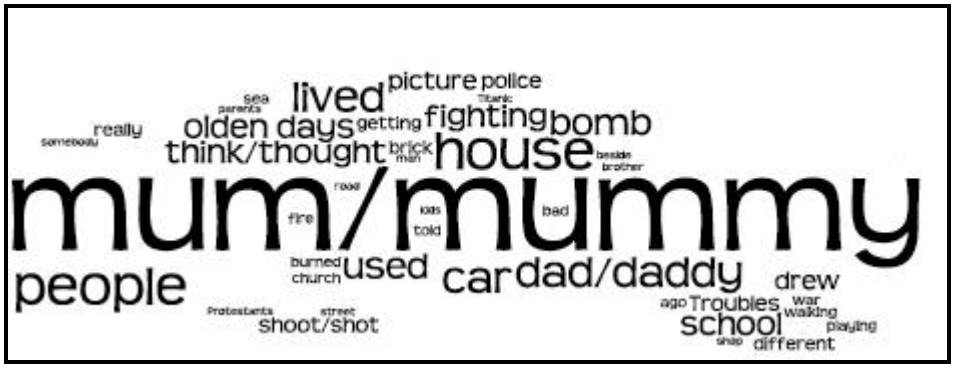



*Figure 4.21: Word cloud of P7 children's Picture B*


**Type of school differences/similarities**

Significant differences and similarities were also found between children attending the three different types of school (i.e. maintained, controlled and integrated), in terms of the themes that appeared in their drawings (see Tables 4.14-4.17).

A higher proportion of children attending maintained schools drew or talked about violence in one/both picture/s than those attending controlled and integrated schools (51% vs. 38% and 19%, $p<0.01$), especially in Picture B (49% vs. 31% and 19%, $p<0.01$). However, a significantly larger proportion of children in controlled schools depicted consequences of war/violence than children in maintained and integrated schools (27% vs. 15% and 5%, $p<0.05$) (Table 4.14).

*Table 4.14: Violence and policing themes among school groups*

| | Maintained | | Controlled | | Integrated | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Violence ** | 36 | 51 | 27 | 38 | 7 | 19 | 70 | 39 |
| Viol. Picture A | 5 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 9 |
| Viol. Picture B** | 35 | 49 | 22 | 31 | 7 | 19 | 64 | 36 |
| Activities [a] | 26 | 37 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 16 | 56 | 31 |
| Instruments [a] | 22 | 31 | 17 | 24 | 4 | 11 | 43 | 24 |
| Consequences* | 11 | 15.5 | 19 | 27 | 2 | 5 | 32 | 18 |
| Emotions | 4 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 5 | 13.5 | 18 | 10 |
| Policing * | 13 | 18 | 12 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 14 |
| Pol. Picture A | 7 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 8 |
| Pol. Picture B | 7 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 7 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

No children in the integrated school portrayed *policing* in any of their pictures, while a similar proportion of children in the maintained and controlled schools did so (0% vs. 18% and 17%, p<0.05) (Table 4.14).

None of the children in the integrated school made any reference to *awareness of sectarianism and community relations/identity*, while most of those that did attended maintained schools and the rest attended controlled schools (0% vs. 20% and 11%) (Table 15).

Regarding the category negative elements, a higher proportion of children attending controlled and integrated schools than those attending maintained schools (37% and 32% vs. 13%, p<0.01) portrayed this theme in one/both picture/s, especially in Picture B (24% and 27% vs. 8%, p<0.05) (Table 4.15).

*Table 4.15: 'Awareness of sectarianism' and 'negative elements' themes among school groups*

| | Maintained | | Controlled | | Integrated | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Awareness of sect | 14 | 20 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 12 |
| Aw. Picture A | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4 |
| Aw. Picture B | 13 | 18 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 9.5 |
| Negative elements** | 9 | 13 | 26 | 37 | 12 | 32 | 47 | 26 |
| Neg. Picture A | 4 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 5 | 13.5 | 18 | 10 |
| Neg. Picture B* | 6 | 8.5 | 17 | 24 | 10 | 27 | 33 | 18 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

*Table 4.16: 'Positive elements of peace/hope' themes among school groups*

| | Maintained | | Controlled | | Integrated | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Positive elements | 64 | 90 | 64 | 90 | 36 | 97 | 164 | 92 |
| Positive. Picture A | 64 | 90 | 57 | 80 | 36 | 97 | 157 | 88 |
| Positive. Picture B [a] | 32 | 45 | 42 | 59 | 24 | 65 | 98 | 55 |
| Negation of war ** | 32 | 45 | 50 | 70 | 18 | 49 | 100 | 56 |
| House (in neg.war) | 17 | 24 | 21 | 30 | 7 | 19 | 45 | 25 |
| Social network | 30 | 42 | 28 | 39 | 19 | 51 | 77 | 43 |
| Nature | 42 | 59 | 35 | 49 | 17 | 46 | 94 | 52.5 |
| Positive actions * | 44 | 62 | 30 | 42 | 24 | 65 | 98 | 55 |
| Positive emotions ** | 40 | 56 | 22 | 31 | 27 | 73 | 89 | 50 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

There were no statistically significant differences in terms of the occurrence of positive elements in the pictures, except in terms of sub-themes within that category. A significantly larger percentage of children attending integrated schools than children in maintained and controlled schools portrayed positive emotions in one/both pictures (73% vs. 56% and 31%, p<0.01), whereas a higher percentage of children attending

controlled schools than children in maintained and integrated schools depicted negation of war/violence (70% vs. 45% and 48%, p<0.01). In addition, a smaller proportion of children in controlled schools rather than children in maintained and integrated schools portrayed positive actions in their pictures (42% vs. 62% and 65%, p<0.05).

More children in controlled schools depicted 'neighbourhood physical elements' than children in integrated and maintained schools in one/both picture/s (79% vs. 62% and 42%, p<0.01), and the differences were also significant in Picture A (49% vs. 40% and 27%, p<0.05) and Picture B (61% vs. 46% and 25%, p<0.01); they also drew more houses (52% vs. 35% and 24%, p<0.01) and streets or roads (34% vs. 19% and 14%, p<0.05).

*Table 4.17: 'Neighbourhood physical elements' themes among school groups*

| | Maintained | | Controlled | | Integrated | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Physical elements** | 30 | 42 | 56 | 79 | 23 | 62 | 109 | 61 |
| Phys.el. Picture A* | 19 | 27 | 35 | 49 | 15 | 40.5 | 69 | 38.5 |
| Phys.el. Picture B** | 18 | 25 | 43 | 61 | 17 | 46 | 78 | 44 |
| Houses** | 17 | 24 | 37 | 52 | 13 | 35 | 67 | 37 |
| Streets/roads* | 10 | 14 | 24 | 34 | 7 | 19 | 41 | 23 |
| Shops [a] | 5 | 7 | 14 | 20 | 6 | 16 | 25 | 14 |

* Significant difference, p<0.05
** Significant difference, p<0.01
[a] Near significant difference, p<0.1

Children in the different types of school used similar but also distinct words to describe their pictures of the present and the past of their country. Figures 4.22-4.27 illustrate that. Children in all the schools described their Picture A with similar words, such as: house, friend, people, play/playing and football (especially in maintained schools). The word "school" was especially mentioned by children in controlled schools, and less often by children in maintained schools. The word "park" was cited in integrated and controlled schools, whereas the word "police" was stated by children in maintained and controlled schools equally. Belfast was especially mentioned by children in controlled schools. In the integrated school, and no other type of school, children used words such as happy, pretty, fun and nice to describe Picture A (Figure 4.24).

*Figure 4.22: Word cloud of Picture A for children attending the integrated school*


*Figure 4.23: Word cloud of Picture A for children attending controlled schools*

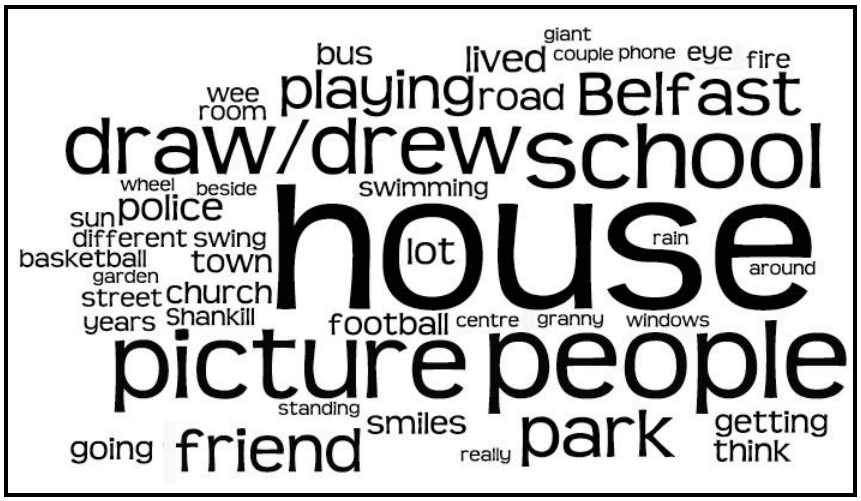


*Figure 4.24: Word cloud of Picture A for children attending maintained schools*


When explaining their Picture B, children in all types of schools used words such as "mum/mummy", and less often "dad/daddy", as well as people, car/s and house (Figures 4.25, 4.26 and 4.27). However, children also used different words depending on the school they attended. Whereas children in the integrated schools used words such as sea, play, children and bad, children in controlled and maintained schools used words related to war/conflict, such as: war, bombs, fight and police. Children in maintained schools particularly used the following words: Troubles, shooting/shot, hitting, IRA, British/Brits and gun.

*Figure 4.25: Word cloud of Picture B for children attending the integrated school*

*Figure 4.26: Word cloud of Picture B for children attending controlled schools*

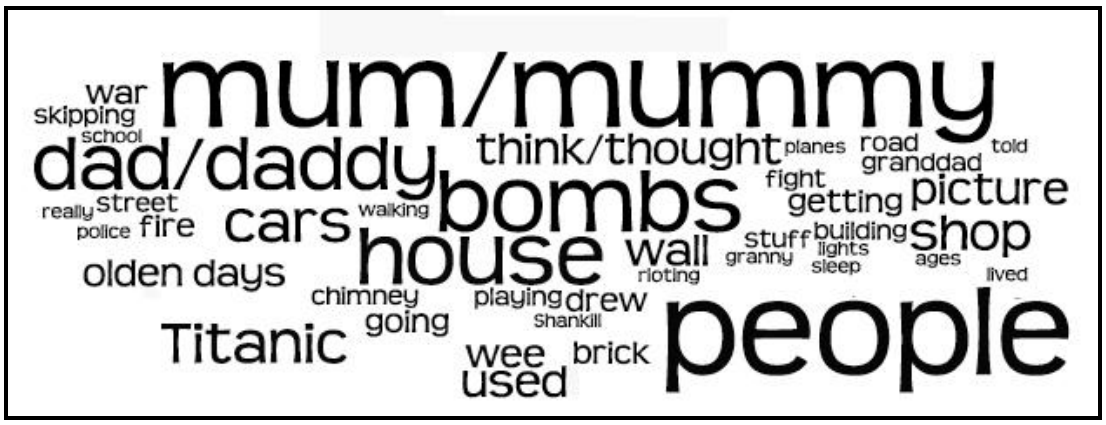



*Figure 4.27: Word cloud of Picture B for children attending maintained schools*


## 6. DISCUSSION

The drawings and comments that the participant children made in this study illustrated differences among different groups of them, but also similarities and trends. These data were analysed from different perspectives, looking at emergent themes, the particular narratives connecting the drawings, and the influence that the curriculum taught in the classroom had on the children, as data collection took place in that particular setting.

Images depicting positive elements of hope/peace were by far the most frequent (71%), and were especially present in the pictures depicting the present (Picture A) (88%). Negative elements (other than violence) and violent references were mostly portrayed in the pictures representing the past (Picture B), with 36% of all Pictures B depicting violence compared to 9% of all Pictures A, and 18% of all Pictures B

depicting negative elements compared to 10% of all Pictures A. Thus, in general, children in the study illustrated the present in a more "positive" light than the past. However, policing appeared in slightly more pictures of the present than the past, but the difference was not significant (15 Pictures A compared to 12 Pictures B). Indeed, it is not surprising that the police appeared within violent scenes in some children's pictures of growing up in Northern Ireland, as research has revealed a problematic and often troubled relationship between young people and the police in working-class communities across the region (e.g. Byrne & Jarman, 2011; McAlister *et al.*, 2009).

Awareness of sectarianism and community relations did not appear very often in the pictures. In a recent study of young people's perceptions in Northern Ireland (Roche, 2008), it was argued that the young people were so isolated from the other community that they were not really aware of the presence of sectarianism, living in a kind of "cocoon" within their own communities. That could maybe be an explanation for the minimal occurrence of sectarianism in the children's pictures. When the theme appeared, however, was mostly associated with the displaying of flags and other political emblems and symbols, as expression of political and cultural identities. This is a common feature in Northern Ireland, where territorial differences are regularly manifested in an exaggerated proliferation of flags (especially at certain times of the year, such as around the 12$^{th}$ July celebrations), although it is also common throughout the world (Bryan, Stevenson, Gillespie & Bell, 2010).

Some children in the present study reported that their main source of information on the past was their parents, while others seemed to be heavily influenced by their peers, few were first hand witnesses of violent events, heard/saw them in the news, or read information in websites. The school curriculum also had a strong influence in terms of what the children chose to draw. Even though teachers were not asked specifically what they taught in class, the document setting out the Northern Ireland revised curriculum (CCEA, 2007) was consulted, and helped make sense of many of the drawings the children produced. Thus, in summary, children's narratives on the past were formed through a multitude of influences.

The findings extracted from the drawings and narratives point clearly towards the influence of education, gender, and age when it comes to perceptions of political violence vs. peace in a transitional society. Some of the differences among groups of

children confirmed earlier findings from studies looking at children's perceptions of peace and war. For example, in terms of gender, more girls than boys represented negative emotions and consequences of war and violence, while more boys than girls depicted actions and instruments of war and violence (McLernon & Cairns, 2001). Girls also reported more positive elements of peace/hope than boys, substantiating results from studies where girls were more able to define peace compared to boys (Hall, 1993; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993; McLernon & Cairns, 2001). However, apart from differences, similarities between boys and girls were also found, with similar percentages portraying negative emotions resulting from war/violence, and equal (small) numbers depicting violence in their Pictures A. In fact, these findings suggest that boys and girls had a similar "positive" (or optimistic and hopeful) view of Northern Ireland's present, as the majority of them, in similar proportions, drew positive elements in Picture A, especially in terms of positive actions and their own houses.

As for age, a higher percentage of older children depicted violence and awareness of sectarian elements compared to younger children. That might coincide with findings from other studies that have concluded that older children have a more sophisticated understanding of these issues, i.e. violence/war (e.g. Walker *et al.*, 2003) and sectarianism (e.g. Cairns, 1987). However, as it is the case for the "gender" variable, similar numbers of children in both stages depicted positive elements.

As expected, a higher proportion of children living in the urban area and attending segregated education depicted violence, policing, and awareness of sectarianism compared to children living in the rural area and attending an integrated school. There were also some differences between children in all three types of schools, as more children attending maintained schools depicted violence, especially in Picture B; more children in controlled schools depicted consequences of war, and negation of war; a larger proportion of children in controlled and integrated schools (compared to those in maintained schools) portrayed negative elements (other than violence); and a larger proportion of children in integrated schools drew positive emotions. However, as it is the case for gender and age, an important similarity was found among children in all schools, i.e. a similar proportion of children (the majority) attending each school type depicted positive elements of peace/hope, particularly in their Pictures A.

To sum up, the data gathered in this study revealed gender, age, and school type differences in children's perspectives and understandings, but also similarities between these groups.

## 7. SUMMARY

Drawings do not "speak for themselves". As Newman *et al.* (2006) argue, the pictures presented in the drawings of the children in this study (or in another study or context) are 'partial and skewed, as are the narratives they serve to illustrate. They should not be regarded as a trace of reality, but as a means of representation', as they 'are constructed for a specific purpose, forming part of a story that becomes mediated through the adult researcher' (p.301). However, despite the obvious limitations, the drawings (together with the child's explanation of them) illustrated these children's perceptions of their present-day lives in Northern Ireland, and the lives of their predecessors, and showed to what extent concepts of violence, conflict, and peace were featured in their perceptions, when asked to complete this activity.

Sources of information on the past that the children availed of when drawing their pictures appeared to be their own parents, their peers, the media, and the school curriculum. In order to explore to what extent families influenced their perceptions, data from the children's parents were also collected and analysed. The findings are presented in next chapter, i.e. Chapter 5. Chapter 6 reveals to what extent the parents' attitudes and experiences shaped what the children chose to draw, by pulling together both sets of data.

# CHAPTER 5: THE PARENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to 179 children, the parents of 73 of these children took part, by completing a questionnaire on a variety of issues.

In this chapter, the parents' data are examined and analysed, in order to reveal their opinions, beliefs, attitudes, general mental health, and experiences. Connections between these different dimensions are also explored through chi-square tests, independent t-tests, and Pearson correlation coefficients, and thus factors associated with certain variables (i.e. political attitudes, communication with children, and children's behaviour and parents' mental health) are reported. Although it was not always possible to obtain statistically significant relationships, as the numbers were too small in some cross-tabulation tables' cells (with chi-square tests being irrelevant), considerable/large differences were still noted.

Finally, the data collected from these parents are compared with survey data for the Northern Irish population (i.e. the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey), and a discussion on the findings is provided. In the following chapter, Chapter 6, the parents' and children's data are merged to uncover the associations between these two sets of perspectives.

## 2. PARENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

### Demographic information

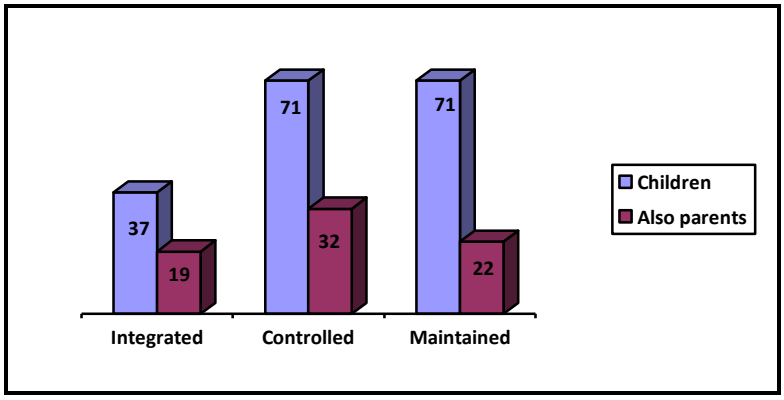
Most of the parents that took part:

- were mothers (n=58), rather than fathers (n=14) or step fathers (n=1);
- had daughters (n=41), rather than sons (n=32) taking part;
- had children attending a controlled school (n=32), rather than maintained (n=22) or integrated (n=19) schools;
- were over 30 years old (n=57), rather than younger (n=16); and

- lived in inner city (n=51), rather than on the outskirts (n=8), in a village (n=8), or in the country (n=6).

The response rate for the questionnaires was higher in the integrated school (51%) and controlled schools (45%) rather than the maintained schools (31%) (see Figure 5.1).

*Figure 5.1: Number of children who took part and parents returning Qs within each type of school*




Respondents had between one and nine children, the majority (74%) having between two and four (n=54), the mean being 3 children (SD 1.6). However, the mean of children living with them was slightly lower, at 2.7 children (SD 1.2). A considerable number of parents (n=33) were not living with a partner or spouse.

All the parents whose children attended the integrated school were over 30, with the majority being over 40 (68%), whereas parents of children attending controlled and maintained schools tended to be younger. For instance, the majority of parents aged 25-30 were bringing their children to a controlled school (69%), and the rest (31%) had children attending a maintained school. As for living arrangements, most parents whose children attended a maintained school (64%) were not living with a partner/spouse, while the majority of those whose children attended the integrated school (74%) and more than half of those who brought their children to a controlled school (56%) were living with their partner.

The majority of parents lived in a segregated neighbourhood, with 48% living in a mostly Protestant area, and 30% living in a mostly Catholic area, and only 22% living in a fairly mixed area. All 16 parents living in a fairly mixed area were bringing their

children to the integrated school, and only three (of the 19) parents whose children were attending that same school lived in a segregated area.

Given the fact that most respondents lived in a segregated neighbourhood, it is not surprising that the majority (74%) reported that most or all of their neighbours were of the same religious background as them. Only 11% said that half or more than half of their neighbours were of a different religious background. Residential segregation seemed to also be associated with social segregation, as 71% of the parents reported that all or most of their friends were of the same religious background as themselves, 15% reported that half of their friends were of the same religious background, and only 7% said that less than half or none were.

### Identity

In terms of national identity, many identified themselves as Northern Irish (n=24), followed by Irish (n=19) and British (n=19). Only seven identified themselves as Ulster. As for their political identity, most parents identified themselves as neither Unionists nor Nationalists (n=32), but 22 did identify themselves as Unionist and 15 as Nationalist. Not surprisingly, national identity and political identity appeared clearly related, as all those that considered themselves to be Irish also identified themselves as Nationalist (63%) or as neither Nationalist nor Unionist (37%); and all those that considered themselves to be British also identified themselves as Unionist (72%) or as neither Unionist nor Nationalist (28%). Most parents who saw themselves as Northern Irish (70%) did identify themselves as neither Unionist nor Nationalist.

## 3. CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was administered to parents, as a measure of the child's general wellbeing and behaviour (as viewed by their parents) (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of this instrument). The mean SDQ scores for the whole sample of parents that took part are shown in Table 5.1. The table also specifies what the borderline and abnormal score ranges are for each scale, and the percentage of children that presented abnormal scores (according to their parents' answers). The mean scores for all the sub-scales fell within the normal range. In total,

13% of the completed SDQs (n=71) scored within the abnormal range for total difficulties (see Table 5.1).

*Table 5.1: SDQ mean scores*

| | N | Min | Max | Mean | SD | Borderline / Abnormal scores | % of abnormal scores |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peer problems | 71 | 0 | 7 | **1.7** | 1.9 | 3 / 4-10 | 18% |
| Emotional symptoms | 71 | 0 | 10 | **2.3** | 2.2 | 4 / 5-10 | 17% |
| Conduct problems | 71 | 0 | 6 | **1.7** | 1.7 | 3 / 4-10 | 15% |
| Hyperactivity | 71 | 0 | 10 | **3.2** | 2.3 | 6 / 7-10 | 8% |
| Pro-social behaviour | 71 | 2 | 10 | **8.4** | 1.9 | 5 / 0-4 | 6% |
| Total difficulties | 71 | 0 | 31 | **9** | 5.9 | 14-16 / 17-40 | 13% |

## 4. PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

### Political attitudes, beliefs and opinions

In terms of their ambitions for the long-term policy for Northern Ireland, 39 of the parents felt it should remain part of the United Kingdom, 16 wanted it to unify with the rest of Ireland, while only five would prefer for it to become an independent state. Four had other ideas (but they did not specify them), while eight were not sure. The majority would vote 'yes' if the vote on the Good Friday Agreement was held again today (n=29), 14 would vote 'no', while 12 would not vote. Those parents who would not vote or would vote 'no' were disenchanted with the peace process (and the politicians), did not feel any change had been achieved (or would be achieved) or that the change that had occurred had not benefited them or their communities. Some of the parents commented on their reasons for their responses:

> *'I believe that the people of the [neighbourhood A] have not got anything out of the agreement.'*
>
> *'Everything is still the same as it was.'*
>
> *'I don't believe politicians have the sincerity or know how to move NI forward politically and economically.'*

*'Paramilitaries still run the areas.'*
*'The nationalist people are getting everything.'*
*'Waste of time voting, for money grabbing politicians (so called), who have been part of paramilitary activities.'*

Those who said that they would vote 'yes' if the referendum were to be held again had disparate opinions of those who would vote 'no'. They felt that things had changed for the better, mentioned their children in terms of these having a better life than they had or aspiring a better life for them, and had a strong desire for peace and an end to the so-called 'Troubles'. Some of them illustrated their responses as follows:

*'Because so much has changed and I want a better life for my children.'*
*'To give our children a better start and understanding without violence.'*
*'To not allow it to go back to the way it was before.'*
*'To bring peace to the country.'*

The majority of parents (71%) felt that if the Agreement remained in place, future prosperity in Northern Ireland would either increase (n=25) or stay the same (n=26), and a considerable number (n=16) did not know. Only five parents thought future prosperity in Northern Ireland would decrease.

When asked whether they believed all the people killed or injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims or not, parents' opinions were very much divided, with 44% either agreeing or agreeing strongly, and 45% either disagreeing or disagreeing strongly. The remainder of parents neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know. However, most of the parents (59%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that all the people bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally, while only 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 15% did neither agree nor disagree, or did not know.

**Gender attitudes and beliefs**

In terms of gender attitudes, parents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home. The majority (79%) agreed or strongly agreed, while only 8% disagreed. Similarly, most

parents (74%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that a man's job is to earn money, and a woman's job is to look after the home and family, while only 11% agreed or strongly agreed, and 14% did neither agree nor disagree.

## 5. PARENTAL EXPERIENCES AND MENTAL HEALTH

### Parents' mental health

Parents completed the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), which is a measure of psychological wellbeing. Using the binary scoring system, scores range from 0 to 12. Higher scores denote more problems, and a score of four or more generally indicates the need for further mental health assessment. The mean score for all the parents that took part was below four, namely 2.6 (SD 3.6). However, 29% of parents scored four or more, while only 17% of the general population in Northern Ireland scored four or more in the most recent survey (ARK, 2006).

Parents who had recently experienced a stressful event (or more than one) (n=21) scored higher (mean score of 5.5, SD 4.5) than parents (n=35) who had not recently experienced a stressful life event (mean score of 1.2, SD 2.3) and this difference was statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

### Parents' experiences of the conflict

The parents who took part had a variety of experiences of the Troubles (see Table 5.2): 16% of them had had a family/close relative killed because of the conflict; 37% had had a family/close relative injured; 65% knew somebody killed or injured; and 34% had been directly affected themselves or their partner/spouse had (mostly intimidation, and home attacks). The majority (76%) had been affected by at least one Troubles-related incident, and 45% had been affected by more than one incident.

*Table 5.2: Parents' experiences of the conflict*

| Parents' experiences of the Troubles | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Close relatives killed | 12 | 16% |
| Close relatives injured | 27 | 37% |
| Know somebody killed/injured | 47 | 65% |
| Them or partner/spouse directly affected | 24 | 34% |
| Been affected by 1+ conflict-related event | 55 | 76% |

Interestingly, the majority of parents whose children attended the integrated school in a rural, relatively peaceful area of Northern Ireland had experienced at least one Troubles-related event (15; 83%): two had had a close relative killed; three had had a close relative injured; 13 knew somebody killed/injured; and six reported that their partner/spouse had been affected.

Parents reported that they had coped either well (n=23) or fairly well (n=15). Only five reported having coped badly. However, most of them (n=40) stated that nobody helped them cope. Four parents believed that their family, their friend's family or the doctor helped them cope, and most parents felt that they could talk freely to their families about the incident/s (n=34). Only nine felt they could not talk freely to their families about Troubles related issues.

In terms of victim identity, most parents who had been affected by the Troubles in some way did not consider themselves either victims or survivors (n=26). Some regarded themselves as survivors (n=12), and only six felt that they were victims. All six parents who considered themselves to be victims had been affected more than one way by the Troubles: two had had close relatives killed; five had had relatives injured; all six reported their partner/spouse having been affected; and five reported knowing somebody killed or injured.

**Communication with their children**

In terms of communication with the children about the Troubles, parents had different attitudes: while 34 stated that they had talked with their child about their experience of the conflict, 29 said that they had not had any conversation about it. Parents had a variety of reasons for not having talked with their child about this topic. Many felt that it

was not necessary for the children to know, that they were too young, or that the child had not asked about it, as it is expressed in the following responses:

*'She doesn't need to know'*
*'Too young to understand and I don't want to implant my thoughts and feelings without her having her own thoughts about what goes on in this country'*
*'It hasn't come up in conversation'*
*'Only when he wants to know'*
*'Don't want my kids to know the hurt and pain of the Troubles'*
*'History – does not affect our lives'*

Most parents who had talked about it had either had an open conversation about it (with the child asking questions and them answering) (n=17) or had made a comment/ briefly mention something/someone (n=13), and that had happened either a few times (n=20) or only once or twice (n=12). Many of these parents had found it either easy or very easy (n=25), or neither easy nor difficult (n=19). However, ten parents had found it a bit difficult, difficult or very difficult/impossible.

When asked what things they found easy to talk with their child about, 17 stated that they could talk to their children about everything/anything. Others explained why they did not talk about certain issues from their past, while some said that they would talk to them about issues related to the conflict, or how their childhoods differed. Some examples of their responses are:

*'About how lucky they are to play on the streets without being soldiers and bomb scares'*
*'My child and I have an honest open relationship. We talk about everything.'*
*'About my childhood, to let him see how different his childhood is.'*
*'Things they need to know, not what does hurt them, unless I need to.'*
*'I don't feel the need to talk to my child about my experiences but I think I would find it easy enough.'*
*'I like to explain to my daughter exactly why the Troubles started and continued for so long. I think it is important for her to know her Irish history.'*

*'I don't find it easy to talk about the Troubles with my child. Everyone has their own opinion, and he will find his. If I spoke to him about one would be affined, he would pick my thoughts and feelings.'*

Similarly, when asked what things they found difficult to talk with their child about, 25 stated that they did not find anything difficult to talk with their child about. Seven specifically mentioned the Troubles, a Troubles-related incident, or something related to the conflict. Other parents mentioned issues, such as death, sex or their own childhoods. Some examples of their responses are:

*'Nothing. I would always try to explain things.'*
*'I try not to mention 'Catholics' as I don't want him to grow up to dislike them. When I talk about the Troubles, I use the term 'terrorists'. I don't want him thinking all Catholics are terrorists.'*
*'My home life as a child; my relationship with my children's father.'*
*'Trying to explain innocent women, men and children being murdered. E.g. The Omagh bomb.'*
*'All things about Troubles.'*

Only a few parents believed somebody else had talked with their child about the Troubles (n=11), and 21 did not know. Those reported to have talked with children about the conflict were: grandparents (n= 7), their partner/child's father or mother (n=4), and uncles (n=1). According to these parents, the above-mentioned family members talked about it not very often (n=8), 'whenever topic arises' (n=1) or 'all the time' (n=1), and they specifically talked about the following:

*'about everything from the troubles started in 69'*
*'how things were so different on the north coast to mid Ulster'*
*'his childhood through the Troubles, as we come from different areas'*
*'past experiences, again objectively put across in a kid-friendly way'*
*'He made them into funny stories'*

## 6. CHILD'S OWN EXPERIENCES

Only a few parents (n=10) believed their child had had any experiences of sectarian incident/s, and four did not know whether they had or not. These experiences consisted of witnessing events, and being attacked or intimidated, as the following responses illustrate:

*'Car was stoned coming home from 12th July bands'*
*'Name calling'*
*'Shouted and spat on'*
*'Saw and heard gunmen shooting'*

According to these parents, these incidents had occurred many times (n=4), quite a few times (n=2), a few times (n=1), and once (n=2). The parents had found out because they were present themselves (n=5), the child explained it to them (n=3), or a neighbour/friend told them about it (n=1). Eight parents had been able to talk about the sectarian incident/s with the child.

## 7. FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' POLITICAL ATTITUDES, IDENTITY AND BELIEFS

Parents' political perspectives and views were associated with a range of variables, which are described below.

### Type of school child attends and area where they live

Given the fact that all the parents living in a fairly mixed area and all except one of the parents living in a rural area (either the country or a small village) were parents whose children attended the integrated school, the associations made here between type of school and parents' political viewpoints would be nearly identical to associations made between the type of area the families lived in and parents' political opinions.

Most of the parents whose children attended a maintained school considered themselves to be Irish, and the rest of them Northern Irish; whereas the parents whose children attended a controlled school regarded themselves as British, Northern Irish or Ulster. Most of the parents of children attending an integrated school identified themselves as Northern Irish (see Table 5.3).

*Table 5.3: Parent national identity by type of school child attends*

| Type of school | Parent's national identity | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Northern Irish | Irish | British | Ulster | |
| Maintained | 6 (27%) | 16 (73%) | 0 | 0 | 22 (100%) |
| Controlled | 9 (29%) | 0 | 15 (48%) | 7 (23%) | 31 (100%) |
| Integrated | 9 (56%) | 3 (19%) | 4 (25%) | 0 | 16 (100%) |
| Total | 24 | 19 | 19 | 7 | 69 |

In terms of their political identity, most of the parents of the children attending a maintained school considered themselves to be Nationalist, and the rest neither Nationalist nor Unionist, whereas most of the parents of children attending a controlled school regarded themselves as Unionist, and a few of them neither Nationalist nor Unionist. In contrast, all the parents of children attending the integrated school except for one did not identify themselves with either identity (see Table 5.4).

*Table 5.4: Parent political identity by type of school child attends*

| Type of school | Parent's political identity | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unionist | Nationalist | Neither | |
| Maintained | 0 | 14 (67%) | 7 (33%) | 21 (100%) |
| Controlled | 22 (76%) | 0 | 7 (24%) | 29 (100%) |
| Integrated | 0 | 1 (5%) | 18 (95%) | 19 (100%) |
| Total | 22 (32%) | 15 (22%) | 32 (46%) | 69 (100%) |

Similarly, most parents bringing their children to a controlled school or to the integrated school wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK, whereas most parents whose children attended a maintained school wanted Northern Ireland to reunify with the rest of Ireland (Table 5.5).

*Table 5.5: Parent's wishes for long-term policy for Northern Ireland by type of school child attends*

| Type of school | Wishes for NI'S long-term policy | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | For it to remain part of the UK | To reunify with rest of Ireland | To become an independent state | Don't know | |
| Maintained | 3 (14%) | 11 (50%) | 2 (9%) | 6 (27%) | 22 (100%) |
| Controlled | 28 (90%) | 0 | 2 (7%) | 1 (3%) | 31 (100%) |
| Integrated | 8 (53%) | 5 (33%) | 1 (7%) | 1 (7%) | 15 (100%) |
| Total | 39 (57%) | 16 (24%) | 5 (7%) | 8 (12%) | 68 (100%) |

Most parents of children attending the integrated school, and half of those bringing their children to a maintained school would vote 'yes', if the vote on the GFA was held again today, whereas nearly half of those whose children attended a controlled school would vote 'no' (see Table 5.6).

*Table 5.6: Parents' voting preference by type of school child attends*

| Type of school | Parents' vote if the GFA was held again | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Wouldn't vote | Don't know | |
| Maintained | 11 (50%) | 2 (9%) | 4 (18%) | 5 (23%) | 22 (100%) |
| Controlled | 6 (20%) | 12 (40%) | 4 (13%) | 8 (27%) | 30 (100%) |
| Integrated | 12 (63%) | 0 | 4 (21%) | 3 (16%) | 19 (100%) |
| Total | 29 (41%) | 14 (20%) | 12 (17%) | 16 (22%) | 71 (100%) |

Most parents of the children attending the integrated school had a broad positive view on the Agreement, and believed that if it remained in place, future prosperity in Northern Ireland would increase (n=11), with only a few thinking that it would stay the same (n=5). All those who thought it would decrease were parents that either brought their children to a maintained school (n=3) or to a controlled school (n=2) (see Table 5.7).

*Table 5.7: Parents' attitude towards the Agreement by type of school*

| Type of school | Future NI prosperity if Agreement remains in place | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Increase | Decrease | Stay the same | Don't know | |
| Maintained | 7 (32%) | 3 (13%) | 7 (32%) | 5 (23%) | 22 (100%) |
| Controlled | 7 (23%) | 2 (6%) | 14 (45%) | 8 (26%) | 31 (100%) |
| Integrated | 11 (58%) | 0 | 5 (26%) | 3 (16%) | 19 (100%) |
| Total | 25 (35%) | 5 (7%) | 26 (36%) | 16 (22%) | 72 (100%) |

In terms of their opinions on victims of the conflict, parents were also split, depending on the type of school their children attended. Most parents of children attending a maintained school (65%) agreed (or strongly agreed) with the statement that all the people that were killed because of the conflict were victims (regardless of their background or their involvement in the conflict), whereas most parents whose children attended a controlled school disagreed (or strongly disagreed) (73%) (see Table 5.8). There was less variation regarding the opinion that all those who were bereaved because of the conflict should be treated equally (regardless of their beloved one's background or involvement in the conflict), however a higher proportion of parents of children attending a controlled school disagreed with the statement (44%) than any other group (see Table 5.9).

*Table 5.8: Parents' opinions on the victims (1st statement)*

| Type of school | All those killed because of the Troubles are victims | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | Neither agree nor dis. | Disagree | |
| Maintained | 13 (65%) | 3 (15%) | 4 (20%) | 20 (100%) |
| Controlled | 7 (23%) | 1 (4%) | 22 (73%) | 30 (100%) |
| Integrated | 11 (58%) | 2 (10%) | 6 (32%) | 19 (100%) |
| Total | 31 (45%) | 6 (9%) | 32 (46%) | 69 (100%) |

*Table 5.9: Parents' opinions on the victims (2nd statement)*

| Type of school | All those bereaved because of T. should be treated equally | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | |
| Maintained | 15 (71%) | 3 (14%) | 3 (14%) | 21 (100%) |
| Controlled | 16 (50%) | 2 (6%) | 14 (44%) | 32 (100%) |
| Integrated | 12 (67%) | 4 (22%) | 2 (11%) | 18 (100%) |
| Total | 43 (61%) | 9 (13%) | 19 (27%) | 71 (100%) |

### Experience of the Troubles

Having experienced at least one Troubles-related event was statistically significantly associated with parents' opinions relating to victims, in that a larger proportion of parents who had been affected by at least one conflict-related incident disagreed with the opinion that all those killed because of the Troubles were victims, compared to the proportion of those who did not experience any incident (62% vs. 14%; $p<0.01$).

## 8. FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN

The following factors appeared to be associated to some degree with parental communication with children.

### Child's age

The age of the child was near significantly associated with parental communication with child about the Troubles ($p<0.1$). Thus, a larger proportion of parents of older children (attending P7) had talked with the child about their experiences of the conflict compared to parents of younger children (attending P6) (65% vs. 44%; $p=0.09$), and also found it easier to talk to their child (60% vs. 35%; $p=0.08$).

### Experience of recent stressful events

Parents who had recently experienced a stressful event/s were more likely to report talking with their children about their experiences of the conflict than parents who had not (71% vs. 35%, $p=0.01$). However, they were also more likely to find it difficult to talk to their children (45% vs. 4%).

### Experience of the Troubles

Despite the low numbers within the cells, the differences related to the variables on the parental experiences of the conflict are considerable enough to be reported here. Over half of the parents who had had any family or close relative killed because of the Troubles found it difficult to talk to their children about it (5 out of 9), with only one finding it easy; while over half of those who did not have that experience found it easy (53%) or neither easy or difficult (36%) to talk about their experiences of the conflict with their children. Similarly, a larger proportion of the parents who had had any family or close relative injured because of the Troubles and of those whose partner/spouse

had been affected in some way found it difficult to talk about it with their children than those who did not have those experiences (36% vs. 7%; and 37% vs. 9%).

### Child's experience of the Troubles

A larger proportion of parents who reported their children having had experienced one or more sectarian incident/s found difficult to talk to their children about the conflict (5 out of 8; 62%) compared to the proportion of those who did not believe their children had (4 out of 43; 9%).

## 9. FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationship between parents' mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12 score, and children's behavioural problems, as measured by SDQ scores. Statistically significant associations were found between GHQ-12 scores and SDQ emotional symptoms scores (for all the parents that took part) ($r=0.33$; $p<0.01$) (i.e. the higher the parental GHQ-12 scores were, the higher the child's emotional symptoms scores); and between GHQ-12 scores and SDQ total difficulties scores ($r=0.25$; $p<0.05$) (i.e. the higher the parental GHQ-12 scores were, the higher the child's total difficulty scores).

These were also calculated just for the parents who had experienced Troubles-related events (n=54), and it was found that GHQ-12 scores were significantly correlated with SDQ emotional symptoms scores ($r=0.38$; $p<0.01$); SDQ hyperactivity scores ($r=0.36$; $p<0.01$); and SDQ total difficulties scores ($r=0.37$; $p<0.01$) (i.e. the higher the parental GHQ-12 scores, the higher the child's SDQ emotional symptoms, hyperactivity and total difficulties scores). This relationship was further confirmed by exploring differences between SDQ score means from parents who scored less than 4 in the GHQ-12 and parents who scored 4 or over. It was found that parents that appeared to have poor mental health (as measured by the GHQ) had children that presented significantly (or near significantly) higher scores than children whose parents did not, in terms of emotional symptoms (3.3 vs. 1.8; $p<0.05$) and hyperactivity (4.2 vs. 2.4; $p<0.1$).

Furthermore, the factors below emerged as linked to either parents' mental health or children's behavioural problems, or both.

**Child's gender**

Statistically significant differences were found in the mean SDQ scores for conduct problems, peer relationship problems and for pro-social behaviour for boys and girls. The mean SDQ score for conduct problems was significantly higher for boys than for girls (2.45 vs. 1.2; $p<0.05$). Boys also tended to score higher in terms of peer relationship problems than girls did (2.2 vs. 1.3; $p<0.05$). Girls' scores were higher than boys' scores, in terms of pro-social behaviour (9.4 vs. 7.3; $p<0.01$).

**Child's age**

Significant differences were also found in terms of the child's age regarding SDQ hyperactivity/inattention and total difficulties scores. Children attending P6 had scores that were lower than children attending P7 for hyperactivity/inattention (3 vs. 3.6; $p<0.01$) and for total difficulties (8.4 vs. 9.6; $p<0.05$), meaning that the older children were more likely to show greater levels of behavioural difficulties.

**Parents' age**

Older parents (aged over 40) scored significantly higher than younger parents (aged 25-30 yrs) in the GHQ (3.3 vs. 1.7, $p<0.05$). Parents aged 31-40 had a mean score of 2.4. Thus, the tendency appeared to be that the older parents were, the higher they scored, indicating higher levels of psychological problems.

**Parents' living arrangements**

SDQ scores for children whose parent did not live with their partner/spouse were significantly (or near significantly) higher than the scores for children whose parent did, in terms of peer relationship problems (2 vs. 1.5; $p=0.05$) and total difficulties (9.9 vs. 8.2, $p<0.05$).

### Experience of the Troubles

Experience of the Troubles was associated to parents' mental health and children's behavioural problems, because:

- parents who had at least been affected by one Troubles-related incident tended to present significantly higher GHQ scores than those who had not been affected by any incident (3.2 vs. 0.8; $p<0.01$); and
- children who according to their parents had experienced sectarian incident/s presented near significantly higher SDQ scores than those who did not, in terms of total difficulties (12.1 vs. 8.5; $p=0.05$).

### Opinion on the victims of the Troubles

Parents who believed that not all those bereaved due to the Troubles should be treated equally scored significantly higher in the GHQ than those who believed all should (3.6 vs. 2.5; $p<0.05$).

### Gender attitudes

Significant relationships were found between parents' general health scores and their agreement or disagreement with the statement 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family'. Those parents who agreed with the statement (n=8) scored significantly higher than those who neither agreed nor disagreed (n=10) (4 vs. 0.8, $p<0.01$); and those who neither agreed nor disagreed scored significantly lower than those who disagreed (n=53) (0.8 vs. 2.6, $p<0.05$).

Although the relationship was not significant, those who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home' (n=7) scored considerably lower than those who either disagreed (n=6) or agreed with the statement (n=57) (1.3 vs. 3.8 & 2.6).

### Communication with children

Children whose parents had talked with them about the conflict scored significantly lower than those who had not, in terms of conduct problems (1.7 vs. 1.8; $p<0.05$), peer relationship problems (1.3 vs. 2.2; $p<0.01$) and total difficulties (8.7 vs. 9.3; $p<0.05$). In

addition, children whose parents found difficult to talk about it with them scored significantly higher than those whose parents found it easy, in terms of conduct problems (2.4 vs. 1.2; $p<0.01$) and emotional symptoms (4.8 vs. 1.8; $p<0.01$), and near significantly higher in terms of total difficulties (13.8 vs. 7.4; $p<0.1$).

## 10. DISCUSSION

In this section, the results are discussed and compared to findings from previous research. This discussion is structured into general themes, i.e. community relations, national identities and political attitudes, victimhood, gender attitudes, mental health, and trans-generational transmission (i.e. communication between parent and child).

### Community relations

In Northern Ireland, communities are divided along sectarian lines, and segregation and community division appears to be still common in many areas, where flags, murals, graffiti, kerb painting and other symbols are displayed to demarcate the territory and control space. These divisions are exemplified by the fact that approximately 95% of social housing is segregated according to religious affiliation; and in 2001, according to the census, over half of the population lived in exclusively Catholic or Protestant neighbourhoods (McAlister *et al.*, 2009).

Indeed, social and residential segregation was well represented in the sample of parents who completed the questionnaire in this study, as the vast majority lived in segregated areas, where all or most of their neighbours shared the same religious background (74%), and all or most of their friends did too (71%). In the general population, these percentages appear to be somewhat lower, e.g. 55% of the NILT respondents in 2010 and 61% in 2005 stated that most or all of their neighbours were of the same religious background, and 61% of the respondents in 2010 and 63% in 2005 stated that most or all of their friends were also of their same religious background.

In this study, residential segregation appeared to be related with segregation within formal education, i.e. the only parents living in a mixed area were those who brought

their children to the integrated school that took part in the study. That would suggest that parents who choose to live in mixed areas tend to also decide on integrated education for their children. It also suggests that segregated education seems to be located in mainly segregated residential areas.

**National identities and political attitudes in a divided 'post-conflict' society**

As in other societies divided by intra-state conflict and sectarianism, in terms of identities of different groups, Northern Irish society has often been reduced to dichotomous distinctions, in this case Catholic and Protestant, Irish and British, or Unionist and Nationalist; and it has been argued that researchers and academics have repeatedly played a role in this reductionism (Muldoon *et al.*, 2008). However, the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey has recently served to uncover 'the extent of diversity evident within the main national and religious groups' (ibid, p. 1). For instance, in terms of national identity, during the years, the survey has revealed the growing popularity of the label "Northern Irish", which has been preferred by 19% of respondents in 1999 and 2002, and 28% in 2010. This increase on the use of this label has also featured in the data coming from this study, as 33% of the respondents described their nationality as Northern Irish. Not surprisingly, this identity was mostly taken by parents of children attending the integrated school.

In terms of their political identity, as in the NILT surveys, the majority of the respondents (44%) refused to identify themselves as either Unionist or Nationalist. The salience of these categories for the identity of the general population appears to have largely decreased since 1998, as the proportion of those identifying themselves as neither Unionist nor Nationalist went from 33% in 1998 to 45% in 2010.

However, most respondents in this study and in the NILT surveys still describe their nationality and political identity unambiguously, as 38% of parents and 37% of respondents in the NILT survey in 2010 identified themselves as Irish Nationalists and British Unionists.

Support for the 1998 Agreement appeared to be given by a smaller proportion of parents in this study, as 40% of the parents would vote "yes" if the vote on the Agreement was held again today, compared to around half of the general population between 2000 and 2005 (51%; NILT, 2000 & 2005). This might be explained by the fact

that many of the parents in the sample were living in disadvantaged urban areas. It does, however, show a worrying picture of disillusionment within socially deprived neighbourhoods of the city, that have not seen enough positive changes in their lives since the peace process started. Despite that, the majority were positive about the future in the region, as they felt that if the Agreement remained in place, future prosperity would either increase or stay the same.

Support for the Agreement has been shown to be associated with national identity; as there appears to be a growing sense of alienation among the Protestant community, who feel increasingly marginalised by wider political developments, and believe that excessive concessions were made to republicans during the peace process (Hughes & Donnelly, 2002). This was reflected in the data from this study, as a larger proportion of parents who identified themselves as British (53%) or Unionist (50%) would vote "no" or would not vote if the vote on the Agreement was held again today, compared to the proportion of parents who identified themselves as Irish (32%) or Nationalist (33%). It is also reflected in some comments that the parents in this study made, such as "The nationalist people are getting everything".

**Victimhood and victim identity/attitudes**

As was argued in Chapter 1 (Section 3), the issue of victims in Northern Ireland is highly controversial.

Previous studies looking at victim identity – i.e. Cairns, Mallet, Lewis, and Wilson's (2003) survey of 1,000 Northern Irish adults, and the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2004), with a sample of 1,800 adults (Brewer & Hayes, 2011) – suggested that only a small proportion of the population (12% and 22% respectively) classified themselves as victims, despite the fact that a much larger proportion had been exposed directly or indirectly to the violence of the conflict. Similarly, in the research reported here, only six parents out of 44 who had answered the question regarded themselves as victims of the conflict, although all 44 had been affected by the Troubles (i.e. either by being bereaved, injured, attacked, etc.). However, while the six parents in this study who considered themselves a victim had had direct/indirect exposure to violence, in the other two surveys, a proportion of those claiming victimhood status did not have any direct or indirect experience of political violence. In addition, the fact that

a large proportion of adults who had direct/indirect experience of violence (46% in the NILT and 69% in the present study) did not perceive themselves as victims illustrates the complexity of this issue. In order to explain these findings, some have argued that many people affected by the Troubles do not like to be identified as a victim, since the concept 'traps them in a specific moment when they experienced loss and it reduces their identification to that experience' (Hamber & Kulle, 2001, p.10). In a qualitative study of 21 adults, it was suggested that one of the reasons for many not viewing themselves as victims, despite their past violent experiences, is the fact that this identification is considered a label of weakness and passivity that they are reluctant to be associated with, as they prefer to view themselves as resilient and able to cope with the trauma and get on with their lives (Ferguson *et al.*, 2010). The term *survivor*, in contrast, has been introduced as a more politically correct term, since it contains a more active dimension and is more far-reaching and self-empowering; thus, 12 parents (out of 44) in this study preferred to be identified as "survivors".

As for attitudes towards victims, the results in both this study and the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey (2004) suggest that about half of the population would have a conception of a "hierarchy of victimhood", where "perpetrators" are perceived as lesser victims (if victims at all), as 43% of the sample in the NILT survey and 45% of the parents in this study either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "all those people killed or injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally no matter whether they were paramilitaries or members of the security forces". Other research has highlighted a perception that there are "deserving" and "undeserving" victims, and that 'some people have a greater right to the label of victim than others' (Ferguson *et al.*, 2010, p. 878).

However, this hierarchy of victims appear to be less supported when taking into account those bereaved due to the conflict, as only 22% of the NILT's (2004) sample and 26% of the participants in this study disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "all those people bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally no matter whether their loved ones were paramilitaries or members of the security forces".

The parents' survey suggested that there were differences among groups of parents in terms of their attitudes towards victims. For instance, experience of the conflict

appeared to be linked with attitudes, in that a larger proportion of parents who had experienced at least one Troubles-related event tended to have a conception of a hierarchy of victims, as expressed above, compared with the proportion of those who had no such experience. Another association was related to the type of school the children attended to; children attending controlled schools had parents who preferred more selective/restricted definitions of who should be considered a victim, and which bereaved people should be helped compared to children attending other types of schools. That might indicate that national and religious identity could also have an effect on this type of attitudes.

**Gender attitudes**

The parents who took part in this research showed less conservative views of gender roles than the general population in 1998 and 2002 (i.e. in the NILT; Gray & Robinson, 2004). When presented with the statement "A man's job is to earn money, a women's job is to look after the home and family", 74% of parents in this study disagreed or strongly disagreed (compared to 53% of the general population in 1998 and 59% in 2002), while only 11% agreed or strongly agreed (compared to 28% of the general population in 1998 and 24% in 2002). Similarly, in terms of views on working women and family life, a larger proportion of participants in this study than the general population believed that a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children than a mother who does not work (outside the home) (79% of parents vs. 67% of the general population in 1998 and 64% in 2002), as only 8% disagreed (compared to 23% of the general population in 1998 and 24% in 2002).

**Mental health and emotional wellbeing**

The mental health of the population in Northern Ireland has been argued to be one of the poorest in the UK and even Europe; and this has often been attributed to the legacy of the conflict. Northern Ireland spends more on medication than anywhere else in the UK. It is also the second highest in Europe for dispensing anti-depressants (BBC News, 2/12/2010). Furthermore, recently, figures given to the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee have shown that the 'proportion of the local population with mental health problems was 25% higher than England and suicide rates had increased by 61% between 1998 and 2007, with 282 people taking their own lives in 2008' (BBC News, 11/02/2010).

In 2006, 17% of the NILT sample scored 4 or more in the General Health Questionnaire. In the present study, the proportion was somewhat higher (29%), but that could be explained by the fact that most of the parents in the sample lived in highly disadvantaged areas of the city, where poor mental health is more prevalent (McLaughlin & Monteith, 2006). As it has been shown in previous research, age was related to mental health and this was also true for the present study, i.e. older parents scored higher in the GHQ-12 than younger parents.

Emotional and behavioural problems in children oftentimes can lead to mental health problems, such as depression (Barlow *et al.*, 2010). About one in ten children in the UK, aged 5-15, has a mental health problem; the most common being emotional disorders, hyperactivity, and conduct disorders (Meltzer *et al.*, 2000); whereas in Northern Ireland, over 20% of children (aged 0-18) suffer significant mental health problems (Chief Medical Officer, 1999; cited in McAlister *et al.*, 2009). In terms of the children in this study, the vast majority did not appear to present with behavioural problems, as measured by the SDQ, as their scores felt within what would be considered the "normal" ranges. However, data presented here highlights gender differences, as boys were more likely than girls to show conduct problems and peer relationship problems, and girls were more likely than boys to show pro-social behaviours. As these findings are based only on parents' perceptions, it is hard to come to firm conclusions. Parents might perceive their sons as more "boisterous" and their daughters as more "sociable", as these are the behaviours that they expect to see. In addition, hyperactivity and inattention appeared to increase with age, as older children (P7s rather than P6s) were more likely to show these behaviours.

Behaviour problems in childhood are often associated with negative, inconsistent parental behaviour as well as high levels of family adversity (Campbell, 1995). On one hand, a considerable number of the children in this study who reportedly had behaviour problems were living in deprived areas. On the other hand, in terms of the type of relationship parents had with their children, data reported here suggests that parental communication on the conflict had a positive influence on children's behaviour, as children whose parents had talked with them were less likely to present behavioural problems than those whose parents had not, and children whose parents found it difficult to talk about these issues with them were more likely to show behavioural problems than those whose parents found it easy.

Evidence of a relationship between exposure to (political/community/sectarian) violence and psychological wellbeing/mental health problems (e.g. depression, substance misuse, behavioural problems, etc.), among children and young people, as well as adults, has been revealed in international (e.g. Dubow *et al.*, 2010; Fowler, Tompsett, Braciszewski, *et al.*, 2009; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Rudenberg *et al.*, 1998) and local research studies (e.g. Muldoon & Trew, 2000; O'Reilly & Stevenson, 2003; Percy, McAloney & McCartan, 2011; Smyth, 1997). To some extent, the present study supports this evidence, as children whose parents believed they had experienced some form of sectarian violence appeared to be (near statistically significantly) more likely to present with behavioural problems, as indicated by the SDQ total difficulties score; and parents who had been directly or indirectly affected by the conflict were significantly more likely to have poor mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12.

**Trans-generational transmission**

As for trans-generational transmission of trauma, as defined as the process of parents passing on the "psychological burden" resulting from their "traumatic" experiences onto their offspring (Aisenberg & Ell, 2005; Kellermann, 2001), similarly to Merrilees *et al.*'s (2011) findings, the study reported here revealed that parents' mental health and children's behavioural problems were partially linked, especially in the case of parents having experienced at least one Troubles-related incident, although these relationships were relatively weak (with correlation coefficients of between 25 and 38%).

Transmission of attitudes and memories can occur at different levels and in different ways. Although attitudes and viewpoints can be transmitted by a large range of behaviours, the present study tapped only into oral communication between parents and children (i.e. verbal behaviours), as these were relatively easier to report in a questionnaire, whereas other "transmission behaviours" (such as more subtle modelling and imitation) might need to be examined in direct observation or detailed interviews.

The study showed different parental attitudes towards telling stories to children about own past experiences of political violence. Whereas some parents admitted having talked about it, others did not and were adamant that it was "best" not to, confirming a "culture of silence" within families (Gilligan, 1997). Not surprisingly, parents with more

"direct" experience of the conflict seemed to find it more difficult to talk to their child about that, and some considered that these stories could actually "hurt" their child. In addition, the age of the child appeared to have an influence, as older children were more likely than younger children to have parents who had talked to them about the conflict, and this difference was near statistically significant.

In terms of children reporting their own experiences of sectarian violence, only a few parents believed that their child had such experiences, and most of these were able to talk about it. However, most of these parents found it difficult to talk to their child about the conflict. It is impossible to know how many other children had actually experienced violence but had not talked about it with their parents.

## 11. SUMMARY

Despite the multiple problems of basing conclusions simply on data collected by questionnaires (e.g. social desirability, context effects, acquiescence bias, limited scope of the data gathered, limited flexibility of response, etc.), the data revealed in this chapter help shed some light into parents' experiences, attitudes and views, and how these might influence each other and the communication between parents and children. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, connections between parents' attitudes, experiences and views, and children's own understandings are explored, revealing the likelihood of "trans-generational transmission".

# CHAPTER 6: THE CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the two previous chapters, findings from the children's drawings and from the parents' questionnaires were exposed. In this chapter, the two sets of data are merged, and results on child-parent dyads are reported. First, however, differences between children whose parents took part and children whose parents did not are investigated, in order to ensure that these two groups were sufficiently similar to validate the results.

Then, the associations between children and parents' data are examined in two sections: one focusing on the differences between the children who depicted violence in one/both pictures and those who did not; and the other focusing on the differences between the children who drew policing and those who did not, and the differences between those who portrayed awareness of sectarianism in one/both pictures and those who did not.

Finally, four case studies of child-parent dyad types are described in detail (Table 6.1). The dyads in the case studies differ in relation to communication vs non-communication between parent and child and expressing violence vs non-expression of violence in the child's drawings.

*Table 6.1: Identification of case studies*

| | Communication | Non-communication |
|---|---|---|
| Depicting violence | Case study 1 | Case study 3 |
| Not depicting violence | Case study 2 | Case study 4 |

A detailed individual case study for each of these parent-child dyads is represented. They reveal the complexity of the differences and similarities found among these families. Each case study is discussed individually, by focusing on particular themes that the case uncovered, i.e. the normalisation of sectarian division; the influence of social context; different understandings of the concept of "peace"; and the "culture of silence". Finally, the last section of the chapter consists of a discussion of the results

presented here, particularly focusing on the concept of “trans-generational transmission”.

## 2. PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

This section exposes differences and similarities of the children whose parents took part versus the children whose parents did not take part.

The response rate for the questionnaires was higher in the integrated school than in the other schools. The lowest response rate came from the maintained schools, although this difference was just near significant ($p<0.1$). There were no significant differences between the response rate for P6s and P7s, and for girls and boys (Table 6.2).

In terms of what the children drew in their pictures, there was only one significant difference. Children whose parents returned the questionnaires were more likely than the rest to depict awareness of sectarianism ($p<0.5$) (Table 6.3).

*Table 6.2: Type of school, Year, and gender by questionnaires returned or not*

| | Qs not returned | | Qs returned | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Maintained school | 49 | 69 | 22 | 31 | 71 | 100 |
| Controlled school | 39 | 55 | 32 | 45 | 71 | 100 |
| Integrated school | 18 | 49 | 19 | 51 | 37 | 100 |
| P6 | 53 | 58 | 38 | 42 | 91 | 100 |
| P7 | 53 | 60 | 35 | 40 | 88 | 100 |
| girls | 65 | 61 | 41 | 39 | 106 | 100 |
| Boys | 41 | 56 | 32 | 44 | 73 | 100 |
| Total | 106 | 59 | 73 | 41 | 179 | 100 |

In sum, the two groups of children (those with participant parent/s and those without) were similar in terms of gender and age, and what they depicted in the drawings. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know whether they differed in any other way, as these are the only variables for which information is available for both groups.

*Table 6.3: Children's drawings by return of parental questionnaires*

| | Qs not returned | | Qs returned | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Violence | 37 | 53 | 33 | 47 | 70 | 100 |
| Police | 13 | 52 | 12 | 48 | 25 | 100 |
| Awareness of sect. | 8 | 36 | 14 | 64 | 22 | 100 |
| Negative elements | 28 | 60 | 19 | 40 | 47 | 100 |
| Positive elements | 96 | 58 | 68 | 42 | 164 | 100 |
| Physical elements | 70 | 64 | 39 | 36 | 109 | 100 |
| Total | 106 | 59 | 73 | 41 | 179 | 100 |

### 3. DEPICTION OF VIOLENCE

No significant associations were found between any parent' variables and children having depicted violence in one or one/both pictures, or not. However, some variables appeared to have a larger influence than others.

For instance, parents' age and living with partner made no difference to whether children depicted violence or not, with percentages being very similar. In terms of national identity, over half of the parents' identifying themselves as Irish and over half of those identifying themselves as Northern Irish had children who had depicted violence in one/both pictures, whereas this was the case for only 26 percent of those identifying themselves as British. Regarding political identity, a much lower percentage of those not identifying themselves as either Unionist or Nationalist had children who depicted violence, compared to those identifying with either side. As for the parents' attitude towards the GFA, a lower percentage of those that would vote either no or would not vote had children depicting violence, compared to those who either did not know or would vote yes (Table 6.4).

*Table 6.4: Parents' characteristics by children drawing violence*

| | | Violence (1/both picts) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Parents' age | 25-30 yrs old | 7 (44) | 9 (56) | 16 |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 15 (48) | 16 (52) | 31 |
| | Over 40 yrs old | 11 (42) | 15 (58) | 26 |
| Living with partner | Yes | 17 (42) | 23 (58) | 40 |
| | No | 16 (48) | 17 (52) | 33 |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 13 (54) | 11 (46) | 24 |
| | Irish | 11 (58) | 8 (42) | 19 |
| | British | 5 (26) | 14 (74) | 19 |
| | Ulster | 3 (43) | 4 (58) | 7 |
| Political identity | Unionist | 12 (54) | 10 (46) | 22 |
| | Nationalist | 9 (60) | 6 (40) | 15 |
| | Neither | 11 (34) | 21 (66) | 32 |
| What parent would vote on the GFA | Yes | 14 (48) | 15 (52) | 29 |
| | No | 5 (36) | 9 (64) | 14 |
| | Wouldn't vote | 3 (25) | 9 (75) | 12 |
| | Don't know | 11 (69) | 5 (31) | 16 |

In terms of gender attitudes, most of the parents who disagreed with the statement 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home' had children who depicted violence (Table 6.4). As for parents' views on victims, this variable did not seem to make a difference, as parents with children who depicted violence and those with children who did not were equally divided in terms of whether they agreed or disagreed with the given statements (Table 6.5).

Over half of the parents who had experienced one or more stressful events recently had children who depicted violence. Most parents who had had a family/close relative killed because of the Troubles and over half of the parents whose partner/spouse or themselves had been directly affected by the Troubles and of those who had been affected in more than one way had children drawing violence in one/both pictures. How they coped with the loss/injury was not related to whether or not the children depicted violence.

*Table 6.5: Gender attitudes and opinion on victims by children drawing violence*

| | | Violence (1/both picts) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| A working mother can establish just as warm & secure relationship as one who does not work | Agree | 25 (44) | 32 (56) | 57 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 2 (29) | 5 (71) | 7 |
| | Disagree | 5 (83) | 1 (17) | 6 |
| A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home & family | Agree | 4 (50) | 4 (50) | 8 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 4 (40) | 6 (60) | 10 |
| | Disagree | 25 (47) | 28 (53) | 53 |
| all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 15 (48) | 16 (52) | 31 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 1 (17) | 5 (83) | 6 |
| | Disagree | 14 (44) | 18 (56) | 32 |
| all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 20 (46) | 23 (54) | 43 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 3 (33) | 6 (67) | 9 |
| | Disagree | 9 (47) | 10 (53) | 19 |

Most of those who considered themselves to be a victim and half of those who considered themselves to be a survivor had children who portrayed violence in one/both pictures, compared to less than 40% of those who did not consider themselves to be either. Parents' general mental health did not seem to play a part in whether or not children drew violence, as nearly half of the parents who scored less than 4 in the GHQ and nearly half of those who scored 4 and more had a child who depicted violence (Table 6.6).

While over half of those who had talked to their children about their experience of the Troubles had children depicting violence, just over a third of those who did not talk about it had children who did portray violence in one/both pictures. In fact, there was a statistically significant relationship between parents having talked with their child about the experience of the Troubles and children depicting violence in Picture B ($p<0.05$), with 53% of the children whose parents had talked to them about their experience depicting violence in the picture on the past, compared to only 28% of those whose parents had not talked to them about it or had not answered the question. Over half of the parents who made a comment or briefly mention something/someone and over half of those who had an open conversation about it had a child who depicted violence.

*Table 6.6: Parents' experiences and mental health by children drawing violence*

| | | Violence (1/both picts) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Experienced stressful event/s | Yes | 13 (62) | 8 (38) | 21 |
| | No | 16 (46) | 19 (54) | 35 |
| Had close relatives killed | Yes | 8 (67) | 4 (33) | 12 |
| | No | 25 (41) | 36 (59) | 61 |
| Had close relatives injured | Yes | 15 (56) | 12 (44) | 27 |
| | No | 18 (40) | 27 (60) | 45 |
| Know somebody killed/injured | Yes | 20 (43) | 27 (57) | 47 |
| | No | 12 (48) | 13 (52) | 25 |
| Directly affected | Yes | 14 (58) | 10 (42) | 24 |
| | No | 17 (37) | 29 (63) | 46 |
| Been affected in 2+ ways | Yes | 18 (54) | 15 (46) | 33 |
| | No | 15 (37) | 25 (63) | 40 |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 10 (43) | 13 (57) | 23 |
| | Fairly well | 8 (53) | 7 (47) | 15 |
| | Badly | 2 (40) | 3 (60) | 5 |
| What parent consider themself to be | Victim | 4 (67) | 2 (33) | 6 |
| | Survivor | 6 (50) | 6 (50) | 12 |
| | Neither | 10 (38) | 16 (62) | 26 |
| GHQ-12 | Less than 4 | 24 (46) | 28 (54) | 52 |
| | 4 or more | 9 (43) | 12 (57) | 21 |

The majority of parents who found it difficult talking to their children had a child that portrayed violence, compared to just over half of those who found it easy, and less than a quarter of those who found it neither easy or difficult (Table 6.7).

With regards to SDQ scores, most children presenting a borderline score and nearly half of those having abnormal scores for conduct problems depicted violence in one/both pictures, compared to less than 40% of those with normal scores. Three out of four children with an abnormal score for pro-social behaviour portrayed violence in one/both pictures. Finally, most children (6 out of 9) with an abnormal score for total difficulties as measured by the SDQ portrayed violence in one/both pictures (Table 6.8).

*Table 6.7: Parents' communication with children by children drawing violence*

| | | Violence (1/both picts) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Had parent talked with child | Yes | 18 (53) | 16 (47) | 34 |
| | No | 10 (34) | 19 (66) | 29 |
| | No answer | 5 (50) | 5 (50) | 10 |
| How the parent had talked with child | Make a comment | 7 (54) | 6 (46) | 13 |
| | Open conversation | 9 (53) | 8 (47) | 17 |
| Degree of difficulty parent find talking to their children | Difficult | 7 (70) | 3 (30) | 10 |
| | Neither easy nor difficult | 3 (16) | 16 (84) | 19 |
| | Easy | 13 (52) | 12 (48) | 25 |

*Table 6.8: SDQ by children drawing violence*

| | | Violence (1/both picts) | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal score | 23 (43) | 31 (57) | 54 |
| | Borderline score | 2 (40) | 3 (60) | 5 |
| | Abnormal score | 7 (58) | 5 (42) | 12 |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal score | 19 (39) | 30 (61) | 49 |
| | Borderline score | 8 (73) | 3 (27) | 11 |
| | Abnormal score | 5 (45) | 6 (55) | 11 |
| SDQ hyperactivity/ inattention | Normal score | 26 (44) | 33 (56) | 59 |
| | Borderline score | 3 (50) | 3 (50) | 6 |
| | Abnormal score | 3 (50) | 3 (50) | 6 |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal score | 23 (43) | 30 (57) | 53 |
| | Borderline score | 3 (60) | 2 (40) | 5 |
| | Abnormal score | 6 (46) | 7 (54) | 13 |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal score | 27 (43) | 36 (57) | 63 |
| | Borderline score | 2 (50) | 2 (50) | 4 |
| | Abnormal score | 3 (75) | 1 (25) | 4 |
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal score | 26 (43) | 35 (57) | 61 |
| | Borderline score | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Abnormal score | 6 (67) | 3 (33) | 9 |

## 4. DEPICTION OF POLICING AND AWARENESS OF SECTARIANISM

No significant associations were found between any parents' variables and children having depicted policing or awareness of sectarianism in one/both pictures, or not. However, some variables appeared to have a larger influence than others.

Parent's age appeared to make some difference in terms of children depicting awareness of sectarianism, as a larger proportion of parents aged between 31 and 40 had children depicting this category, compared to parents in other age groups. However, age made no difference in terms of children portraying policing. A larger percentage of parents who were not living with a partner/spouse had children depicting policing, compared to parents who were living with their partner. However, living with a partner did not make any difference in terms of awareness of sectarianism. In terms of national identity, nearly half of the parents identifying themselves as Irish had children who depicted awareness of sectarianism, compared to very small percentages of those identifying themselves as Northern Irish or British. Regarding political identity, barely any differences were found for children depicting policing, but a larger percentage of parents identifying themselves as Nationalist (than those identifying themselves as either Unionist or neither Nationalist nor Unionist) had children portraying awareness of sectarianism. As for the parents' attitude towards the GFA, only one parent who would vote "yes" had a child depicting policing, compared to over a quarter of those that would vote "no", a quarter of those who would not vote and of those who did not know. In contrast, larger percentages of those who would vote "yes" or who did not know had children portraying awareness of sectarianism, compared to those who would vote "no" or would not vote (Table 6.9).

*Table 6.9: Parents' characteristics by children drawing policing and awareness of sectarianism*

| | | Policing | | Awareness of sect | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Parents' age | 25-30 yrs old | 3 (19) | 13 (81) | 3 (19) | 13 (81) | 16 |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 6 (19) | 25 (81) | 10 (32) | 21 (68) | 31 |
| | Over 40 yrs old | 3 (11) | 23 (89) | 1 (4) | 25 (96) | 26 |
| Living with partner | Yes | 4 (10) | 36 (90) | 8 (20) | 32 (80) | 40 |
| | No | 8 (24) | 25 (76) | 6 (18) | 27 (82) | 33 |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 5 (21) | 19 (79) | 2 (8) | 22 (92) | 24 |
| | Irish | 3 (16) | 16 (84) | 8 (42) | 11 (58) | 19 |
| | British | 2 (10) | 17 (90) | 4 (21) | 15 (79) | 19 |
| | Ulster | 2 (29) | 5 (71) | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Political identity | Unionist | 4 (18) | 18 (82) | 4 (18) | 18 (82) | 22 |
| | Nationalist | 3 (20) | 12 (80) | 6 (40) | 9 (60) | 15 |
| | Neither | 4 (13) | 28 (87) | 4 (13) | 28 (87) | 32 |
| What parent would vote on the GFA | Yes | 1 (3) | 28 (97) | 7 (24) | 22 (76) | 29 |
| | No | 4 (29) | 10 (71) | 2 (14) | 12 (86) | 14 |
| | Wouldn't vote | 3 (25) | 9 (75) | 1 (8) | 11 (92) | 12 |
| | Don't know | 4 (25) | 12 (75) | 4 (25) | 12 (75) | 16 |

Neither parental gender attitudes nor opinion on victims appeared to make any difference to whether children had depicted policing or awareness of sectarianism (Table 6.10).

Having experienced one or more stressful events recently made no difference to whether children had depicted policing or awareness of sectarianism. A larger proportion of parents who had had a relative killed due to the conflict had a child who depicted policing, compared to those who had not had any relative killed. None of the parents who considered that they had coped well with the loss/injury had a child portraying policing, and none of the parents who felt they had coped badly had a child depicting awareness of sectarianism, but nearly half of them (2 out of 5) had a child portraying policing. A larger proportion of those who considered themselves to be a victim had children who portrayed policing in one/both pictures, compared to none of those who considered themselves to be a survivor.

*Table 6.10: Gender attitudes and opinion on victims by children drawing policing and awareness of sectarianism*

| | | Policing | | Awareness of sect | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| A working mother can establish just as warm & secure relationship as one who does not work | Agree | 10 (17) | 47 (83) | 12 (21) | 45 (79) | 57 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| | Disagree | 2 (33) | 4 (67) | 2 (33) | 4 (67) | 6 |
| A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home & family | Agree | 4 (50) | 4 (50) | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 1 (10) | 9 (90) | 1 (10) | 9 (90) | 10 |
| | Disagree | 7 (13) | 46 (87) | 13 (25) | 40 (75) | 53 |
| all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 6 (19) | 25 (81) | 8 (26) | 23 (74) | 31 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| | Disagree | 4 (12) | 28 (88) | 5 (16) | 27 (84) | 32 |
| all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 8 (19) | 35 (81) | 10 (23) | 33 (77) | 43 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 0 | 9 | 1 (11) | 8 (89) | 9 |
| | Disagree | 4 (21) | 15 (79) | 2 (10) | 17 (90) | 19 |

A larger proportion of parents of whose children had depicted policing had high GHQ-12 scores, whereas the vast majority of parents whose children had portrayed awareness of sectarianism showed low scores (Table 6.11).

Half of the children depicting policing and more than half of those depicting awareness of sectarianism had parents who had talked to them about their experience of the conflict. However, parental communication did not affect whether children depicted these themes or not. The majority of parents who found it difficult talking to their children (60%) had a child who depicted policing, compared to 16% of those who found it easy, and none of those who found it neither easy or difficult (Table 6.12).

*Table 6.11: Parents' experiences and mental health by children drawing policing and awareness of sectarianism*

| | | Policing | | Awareness of sect | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Experienced stressful event/s | Yes | 6 (29) | 15 (71) | 5 (24) | 16 (76) | 21 |
| | No | 6 (17) | 29 (83) | 9 (26) | 26 (74) | 35 |
| Had close relatives killed | Yes | 4 (33) | 8 (67) | 2 (17) | 10 (83) | 12 |
| | No | 8 (13) | 53 (87) | 12 (20) | 49 (80) | 61 |
| Had close relatives injured | Yes | 6 (22) | 21 (78) | 5 (19) | 22 (81) | 27 |
| | No | 6 (13) | 39 (87) | 9 (20) | 36 (80) | 45 |
| Know somebody killed/injured | Yes | 5 (11) | 42 (89) | 8 (17) | 39 (83) | 47 |
| | No | 7 (28) | 18 (72) | 6 (24) | 19 (76) | 25 |
| Directly affected | Yes | 5 (21) | 19 (79) | 5 (21) | 19 (79) | 24 |
| | No | 7 (15) | 39 (85) | 9 (20) | 37 (80) | 46 |
| Been affected in 2+ ways | Yes | 6 (18) | 27 (82) | 7 (21) | 26 (79) | 33 |
| | No | 6 (15) | 34 (85) | 7 (17) | 33 (83) | 40 |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 0 | 23 | 4 (17) | 19 (83) | 23 |
| | Fairly well | 3 (20) | 12 (80) | 4 (27) | 11 (73) | 15 |
| | Badly | 2 (40) | 3 (60) | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| What parent consider themself to be | Victim | 4 (67) | 2 (33) | 1 (17) | 5 (83) | 6 |
| | Survivor | 0 | 12 | 3 (25) | 9 (75) | 12 |
| | Neither | 1 (4) | 25 (96) | 4 (15) | 22 (85) | 26 |
| GHQ-12 | Less than 4 | 5 (10) | 47 (90) | 13 (25) | 39 (75) | 52 |
| | 4 or more | 7 (33) | 14 (67) | 1 (5) | 20 (95) | 21 |

A third of children presenting abnormal SDQ scores for emotional symptoms depicted policing and awareness of sectarianism in one/both pictures, compared to 11% and 17% respectively of those with normal scores. Similarly, a third of children presenting abnormal SDQ scores for total difficulties depicted policing and awareness of sectarianism, compared to 13% and 18% respectively of those with normal scores (Table 6.13).

*Table 6.12: Parents' communication with children by children drawing policing and awareness of sectarianism*

| | | Policing | | Awareness of sect | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| Parent talked with child | Yes | 6 (18) | 28 (82) | 8 (23) | 26 (77) | 34 |
| | No | 6 (21) | 23 (79) | 4 (14) | 25 (86) | 29 |
| | NA | 0 | 10 | 2 (20) | 8 (80) | 10 |
| How the parent had talked with child | Make a comment | 2 (15) | 11 (85) | 3 (23) | 10 (77) | 13 |
| | Open conversation | 4 (23) | 13 (77) | 4 (23) | 13 (77) | 17 |
| Degree of difficulty parent find talking to their children | Difficult | 6 (60) | 4 (40) | 1 (10) | 9 (90) | 10 |
| | Neither easy nor difficult | 0 | 19 | 4 (21) | 15 (79) | 19 |
| | Easy | 4 (16) | 21 (84) | 5 (20) | 20 (80) | 25 |

*Table 6.13: SDQ by children drawing policing and awareness of sectarianism*

| | | Policing | | Awareness of sect | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes (%) | No (%) | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal score | 6 (11) | 48 (89) | 9 (17) | 45 (83) | 54 |
| | Borderline score | 1 (20) | 4 (80) | 1 (20) | 4 (80) | 5 |
| | Abnormal score | 4 (33) | 8 (67) | 4 (33) | 8 (67) | 12 |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal score | 7 (14) | 42 (86) | 7 (14) | 42 (86) | 49 |
| | Borderline score | 1 (9) | 10 (91) | 5 (45) | 6 (55) | 11 |
| | Abnormal score | 3 (27) | 8 (73) | 2 (18) | 9 (82) | 11 |
| SDQ hyperactivity/ inattention | Normal score | 7 (12) | 52 (88) | 12 (20) | 47 (80) | 59 |
| | Borderline score | 2 (33) | 4 (67) | 1 (17) | 5 (83) | 6 |
| | Abnormal score | 2 (33) | 4 (67) | 1 (17) | 5 (83) | 6 |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal score | 6 (11) | 47 (89) | 8 (15) | 45 (85) | 53 |
| | Borderline score | 1 (20) | 4 (80) | 3 (60) | 2 (40) | 5 |
| | Abnormal score | 4 (31) | 9 (69) | 3 (23) | 10 (77) | 13 |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal score | 9 (14) | 54 (86) | 14 (22) | 49 (78) | 63 |
| | Borderline score | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| | Abnormal score | 2 (50) | 2 (50) | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal score | 8 (13) | 53 (87) | 11 (18) | 50 (82) | 61 |
| | Borderline score | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Abnormal score | 3 (33) | 6 (67) | 3 (33) | 6 (67) | 9 |

## 5. PARENTAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT CONFLICT AND CHILDREN'S DEPICTION OF VIOLENCE: THE CHILD-PARENT DYADS

Parents' self-reported communication with their children about their experiences of conflict did not appear to be significantly associated with children's depiction of violence in one/both pictures (Table 6.14). However, more children who had depicted violence, especially in Picture B, appeared to have parents who had had some type of conversation with them about their experience of the Troubles [and this relationship was significant ($p<0.05$; 53% vs. 28%) when excluding those parents who did not answer; in Table 6.14, all responses are included].

*Table 6.14: Violence and parent-child communication about Troubles experience*

| | Violence in one/both pics | | | | Violence in Picture B | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NO | | YES | | NO | | YES | |
| Talked with child | 16 | 47% | 18 | 53% | 16 | 47% | 18 | 53% |
| Not talked with child* | 24 | 61% | 15 | 39% | 26 | 67% | 13 | 33% |
| Total | 40 | 55% | 33 | 45% | 42 | 57% | 31 | 43% |

*Parent had not talked with child about experience of the Troubles or it was not applicable, as he/she did not have any experience of the conflict

Clearly, trans-generational transmission of experiences and memories can occur directly (e.g. through story-telling) or indirectly (e.g. through modelling and imitation of attitudes and non-verbal behaviours). The questionnaire used in this study asked explicitly about direct transmission through verbal behaviours. In order to explore this phenomenon in more detail, the connection between parental communication and children portraying violence was examined through the following categorization of parent-child dyads (see Table 6.1):

- Type 1: Cases where the child depicted violence in one/both pictures and the parent had talked to them about their experiences of conflict (n=18);
- Type 2: Cases where the child did not depict violence in any of their pictures but the parent had talked to them about their experiences of conflict (n=16);
- Type 3: Cases where the child depicted violence in one/both pictures but the parent had not talked to them about their experiences of conflict (n=15);
- Type 4: Cases where the child did not depict violence in any of their pictures and the parent had not talked to them about their experiences of conflict (n=24).

Descriptive tables are provided on a wide range of variables for these parent-child dyads, and subsequently, comparisons are drawn between the different dyads.

**Characteristics Type 1 dyads: Depicting violence and parental communication (n=18)**

As described in Table 6.15, there were an equal number of boys and girls in Type 1 dyads (i.e. children depicting violence in one/both pictures, whose parents had talked to them about their experience of the conflict). In terms of type of school, this group was formed by nearly the same number of children attending maintained and controlled schools, and only 17% of children attending an integrated school. Two thirds attended a P7 classroom. Only two had experienced sectarian events themselves, according to their parents. Only one of them showed an abnormal SDQ total difficulties score. All of them depicted violence in Picture B, but only one portrayed violence in Picture A.

*Table 6.15: Characteristics of children in the Type 1 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Boy | 9 | 50% |
| | Girl | 9 | 50% |
| Type of school | Maintained | 8 | 44% |
| | Controlled | 7 | 39% |
| | Integrated | 3 | 17% |
| Age | P6 | 6 | 33% |
| | P7 | 12 | 67% |
| Experience of sectarian events | Had experienced | 2 | 11% |
| | Had not | 15 | 83% |
| | Don't know | 1 | 6% |
| SDQ mean scores | Emotional sympt | 2.2 | SD 2.1 |
| | Conduct problems | 1.6 | SD 1.5 |
| | Hyperactivity | 2.7 | SD 2.2 |
| | Peer relationship | 1.6 | SD 1.5 |
| | Pro-social behaviour | 8.6 | SD 1.9 |
| | Total difficulties | 7.9 | SD 4.7 |
| SDQ SCORES | | | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal scores | 14 | 78% |
| | Abnormal scores | 4 | 22% |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal scores | 12 | 67% |
| | Borderline scores | 4 | 22% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 11% |
| SDQ hyperactivity/inattention | Normal scores | 16 | 89% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 5.5% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 5.5% |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal scores | 13 | 72% |
| | Borderline scores | 2 | 11% |
| | Abnormal scores | 3 | 17% |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal scores | 16 | 89% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 5.5% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 5.5% |
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal scores | 17 | 94% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 6% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Violence in Picture A | Yes | 1 | 6% |
| | No | 17 | 94% |
| Violence in Picture B | Yes | 18 | 100% |
| TOTAL | | 18 | 100% |

As shown in Table 6.16, only three of the parents in this group were aged 25-30 years old, and the rest were older. The majority were living with a partner/spouse, and most considered themselves to be Northern Irish. In terms of political identity, this group was evenly split between those who considered themselves Unionist, Nationalist or neither Unionist nor Nationalist. The majority of parents in this group believed they shared the same religious background with all or most of their neighbours, and five believed that half or less than half of their friends were of the same religious background as themselves. More than half wished Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. The group was evenly split between those who would vote “yes” to the GFA if it was to be held again (n=8; 44%) and those who would not know what to vote (n=8; 44%); and also between those who believed NI future prosperity would increase if the GFA was to remain in place (n=6; 33%), those who believed it would stay the same (n=6; 33%), and those who did not know (n=5; 28%). Half had experienced one or more stressful events recently, but only five had GHQ-12 scores of 4 or more. Over half of these parents had been affected in more than one way by the political conflict; over half knew somebody that had either been killed or injured; half had had close relatives injured; a third had close relatives killed; and a third had been directly affected (or their partner/spouse had). Of those who answered this question, all had coped either well or fairly well with the loss/injury, and most felt that were neither a victim nor a survivor. Half of them disagreed with the statement that all those killed in the conflict should be seen as victims equally, but over half agreed with the statement that all those bereaved by the Troubles should be treated equally.

In terms of communication, most of these parents had either had an open conversation about their experience of the conflict or made a comment / briefly mention an incident or someone related to the Troubles. Generally, this had happened a few times (n=12; 67%). The majority of the parents in this group (n=12; 67%) found talking to the child easy (Table 6.17).

*Table 6.16: Characteristics of the parents in Type 1 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 25-30 yrs old | 3 | 17% |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 8 | 44% |
| | Over 40 yrs | 7 | 39% |
| Living with partner/spouse | Yes | 12 | 67% |
| | No | 6 | 33% |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 8 | 44% |
| | Irish | 5 | 28% |
| | British | 4 | 22% |
| | Ulster | 1 | 6% |
| Political identity | Unionist | 6 | 33% |
| | Nationalist | 5 | 28% |
| | Neither | 6 | 33% |
| Amount of neighbours with same religious background | All | 10 | 55% |
| | Most | 5 | 28% |
| | None | 2 | 11% |
| | Don't know | 1 | 6% |
| Amount of friends with same religious background | All | 7 | 39% |
| | Most | 5 | 28% |
| | Half | 2 | 11% |
| | Less than half & 0 | 3 | 16% |
| | Don't know | 1 | 6% |
| Opinion on what the long-term policy for NI should be | Remain part of UK | 10 | 56% |
| | Reunify with Ireland | 4 | 22% |
| | Become independent | 1 | 6% |
| | DK/No answer | 3 | 16% |
| How would they vote if GFA was held again today | Yes | 8 | 44% |
| | No | 1 | 6% |
| | Wouldn't vote | 1 | 6% |
| | Don't know | 8 | 44% |
| View on what would happen to future prosperity in NI, if Agreement remains in place | Increase | 6 | 33% |
| | Decrease | 1 | 6% |
| | Stay the same | 6 | 33% |
| | Don't know | 5 | 28% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Any stressful events recently | Yes | 9 | 50% |
| | No | 6 | 33% |
| Any close relatives killed due to the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 33% |
| | No | 12 | 67% |
| Any close relatives injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 9 | 50% |
| | No | 9 | 50% |
| Know anybody killed/injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 12 | 67% |
| | No | 6 | 33% |
| Them/partner/spouse affected by the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 33% |
| | No | 12 | 67% |
| Been affected in 2+ ways by the Troubles | Yes | 10 | 56% |
| | No | 8 | 44% |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 7 | 39% |
| | Fairly well | 4 | 22% |
| | No answer/applicable | 7 | 39% |
| Anybody helped parent cope | Yes | 1 | 6% |
| | No | 10 | 55% |
| | No answer/applicable | 7 | 39% |
| Victim/survivor identity | Victim | 1 | 5% |
| | Survivor | 3 | 17% |
| | Neither | 7 | 39% |
| | No answer/applicable | 7 | 39% |
| Opinion: All those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 8 | 44% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 1 | 6% |
| | Disagree | 9 | 50% |
| Opinion: All those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 12 | 66% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 3 | 17% |
| | Disagree | 3 | 17% |
| GHQ-12 | <4 scores | 13 | 72% |
| | ≥4 scores | 5 | 28% |
| | Mean score | 2.2 | SD 3.1 |

*Table 6.17: Communication traits between parent and child in Type 1 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| How parent talked about experience | Make a comment/brief mention | 7 | 39% |
| | Concise explanation of event/s | 1 | 5.5% |
| | Detailed account of event/s | 1 | 5.5% |
| | Open conversation about it | 9 | 50% |
| How often parent talked about experience | Only once or twice | 4 | 22% |
| | A few times | 12 | 67% |
| | Whenever child asks me | 2 | 11% |
| Degree of difficulty parents find talking to child | Difficult | 4 | 22% |
| | Neither easy nor difficult | 2 | 11% |
| | Easy | 12 | 67% |

**Characteristics of Type 2 dyads: Not depicting violence and parental communication (n=16)**

Most of the children in Type 2 dyads (i.e. children that did not depict violence but whose parents had talked to them about the conflict) were girls. Most of them either attended a controlled school (n=6) or the integrated school (n=6). Over half attended a P6 classroom, and only three had experienced sectarian event/s. All except two showed normal SDQ total difficulty scores (Table 6.18).

As shown in Table 6.19, over half of the parents in this group were aged 31-40 years old, and just over half were living with their partner/spouse. Most thought of themselves as Irish (n=5; 31%), and equal numbers identified themselves as Northern Irish (n=4; 25%) and British (n=4; 25%). The majority did not identify themselves as either Unionist or Nationalist. For the majority of these parents, all their neighbours and all or most of their friends were of the same religious background as themselves. They were evenly split in terms of their opinion on what the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be. Although many would vote “yes” to the GFA if it were to be held again (n=6; 37%), a considerable number would vote “no” or would not vote (n=7; 44%). Most of them were not sure whether future prosperity in Northern Ireland would increase, decrease or stay the same. Most of them had experienced stressful event/s recently, and their GHQ-12 mean score was over 4, with the majority having high scores (i.e. 4 or more).

*Table 6.18: Characteristics of children in the Type 2 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Boy | 5 | 31% |
| | Girl | 11 | 69% |
| Type of school | Maintained | 4 | 25% |
| | Controlled | 6 | 37.5% |
| | Integrated | 6 | 37.5% |
| Age | P6 | 9 | 56% |
| | P7 | 7 | 44% |
| Experience of sectarian events | Had experienced | 3 | 19% |
| | Had not | 13 | 81% |
| SDQ mean scores | Emotional sympt | 2.7 | SD 2.1 |
| | Conduct problems | 1.8 | SD |
| | Hyperactivity | 4.1 | SD 1.6 |
| | Peer relationship | 1 | SD 1.3 |
| | Pro-social behaviour | 8.9 | SD 1.4 |
| | Total difficulties | 9.6 | SD 4.5 |
| SDQ SCORES | | | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal scores | 11 | 69% |
| | Borderline scores | 2 | 12% |
| | Abnormal scores | 3 | 19% |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal scores | 12 | 75% |
| | Borderline scores | 2 | 12.5% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 12.5% |
| SDQ hyperactivity/inattention | Normal scores | 12 | 75% |
| | Borderline scores | 3 | 19% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 6% |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal scores | 14 | 88% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 6% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 6% |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal scores | 15 | 94% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 6% |
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal scores | 14 | 88% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 6% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 6% |
| TOTAL | | 16 | 100% |

Over a third had been affected by the Troubles in more than one way; the majority knew somebody killed or injured due to the conflict; and none had had a close relative killed but a few had one or more injured. A few (n=3; 19%) had coped badly with the loss/injury, and the majority had coped either well or fairly well. A few identified themselves as either victims or survivors, with half identifying as neither. They were fairly divided in terms of their opinion on whether all those killed due to the conflict should be seen as victims equally. Half agreed, a quarter disagreed and the other quarter did not either agree or disagree with the statement that all those bereaved should be treated equally.

As shown in Table 6.20, the majority of parents in this group either had had an open conversation about their experience of the conflict or made a comment / briefly mentioned some incident or someone; and for half of them, that happened only once or twice, and for the other half, a few times. Half found it easy talking to their child, while over a third found it neither easy nor difficult.

*Table 6.19: Characteristics of the parents in Type 2 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 25-30 yrs old | 3 | 19% |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 9 | 56% |
| | Over 40 yrs | 4 | 25% |
| Living with partner/spouse | Yes | 9 | 56% |
| | No | 7 | 44% |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 4 | 25% |
| | Irish | 5 | 31% |
| | British | 4 | 25% |
| | Ulster | 2 | 12.5% |
| Political identity | Unionist | 3 | 19% |
| | Nationalist | 3 | 19% |
| | Neither | 9 | 56% |
| Amount of neighbours with same religious background | All | 9 | 56% |
| | Most | 1 | 6% |
| | Half/less than half | 2 | 13% |
| | DK/No answer | 4 | 25% |
| Amount of friends with same religious background | All | 5 | 31% |
| | Most | 6 | 37% |
| | Half | 3 | 19% |
| | DK/No answer | 2 | 13% |
| Opinion on what the long-term policy for NI should be | Remain part of UK | 5 | 31% |
| | Reunify with Ireland | 4 | 25% |
| | Become independent | 3 | 19% |
| | DK/No answer | 4 | 25% |
| How would they vote if GFA was held again today | Yes | 6 | 37% |
| | No | 3 | 19% |
| | Wouldn’t vote | 4 | 25% |
| | Don’t know | 3 | 19% |
| View on what would happen to future prosperity in NI, if Agreement remains in place | Increase | 3 | 19% |
| | Decrease | 1 | 6% |
| | Stay the same | 5 | 31% |
| | Don’t know | 7 | 44% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Any stressful events recently | Yes | 6 | 37.5% |
| | No | 4 | 25% |
| Any close relatives killed due to the Troubles | Yes | 0 | 0% |
| | No | 16 | 100% |
| Any close relatives injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 37.5% |
| | No | 10 | 62.5% |
| Know anybody killed/injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 13 | 81% |
| | No | 3 | 19% |
| Them/partner/spouse affected by the Troubles | Yes | 4 | 25% |
| | No | 11 | 69% |
| Been affected in 2+ ways by the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 37.5% |
| | No | 10 | 62.5% |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 4 | 25% |
| | Fairly well | 5 | 31% |
| | Badly | 3 | 19% |
| | No answer/applicable | 4 | 25% |
| Anybody helped parent cope | Yes | 1 | 6% |
| | No | 11 | 69% |
| | No answer/applicable | 4 | 25% |
| Victim/survivor identity | Victim | 1 | 6% |
| | Survivor | 3 | 19% |
| | Neither | 8 | 50% |
| | No answer/applicable | 4 | 25% |
| Opinion: All those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 6 | 37% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 3 | 19% |
| | Disagree | 7 | 44% |
| Opinion: All those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 8 | 50% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 4 | 25% |
| | Disagree | 4 | 25% |
| GHQ-12 | <4 scores | 7 | 44% |
| | ≥4 scores | 9 | 56% |
| | Mean score | 4.4 | SD 4.1 |

*Table 6.20: Communication traits between parent and child in Type 2 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| How parent talked about experience | Make a comment/brief mention | 6 | 37.5% |
| | Concise explanation of event/s | 2 | 12.5% |
| | Open conversation about it | 8 | 50% |
| How often parent talked about experience | Only once or twice | 8 | 50% |
| | A few times | 8 | 50% |
| Degree of difficulty parents find talking to child | Difficult | 2 | 12.5% |
| | Neither easy nor difficult | 6 | 37.5% |
| | Easy | 8 | 50% |

**Characteristics of Type 3 dyads: Depicting violence and no parental communication (n=15)**

As described in Table 6.21, two thirds of children in Type 3 dyads (i.e. depicting violence in one/both pictures but whose parents had not talked to them about their experience of the conflict) were boys, and the majority were attending a P7 classroom; a few had experienced sectarian events themselves. Over two thirds scored within the normal range in the SDQ total difficulties. All the children in this group, except for two, portrayed violence in Picture B, but only a third depicted this theme in Picture A.

As shown in Table 6.22, most parents in this group were aged between 31 and 40 years, and two thirds were not living with their partner/spouse. The majority identified themselves as Irish (n=6; 40%) or Northern Irish (n=5; 33%). In terms of political identity, they were evenly split. The vast majority believed all their neighbours and all or most of their friends shared their own religious background. They were also split in terms of their opinion on what the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be. Most of them would vote “yes” to the GFA if it were to be held again, while a considerable number would vote “no”. The majority believed that future prosperity in Northern Ireland would either increase (n=6; 40%) or stay the same (n=6; 40%). Two thirds had not experienced any stressful events recently, and less than a third (n=4; 27%) had GHQ-12 scores of 4 or more. Over half had been affected by the conflict in several ways; over half knew somebody killed/injured; over half had been directly affected (or their partner/spouse had); and some had had a close relative injured (40%).

*Table 6.21: Characteristics of children in the Type 3 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Boy | 10 | 67% |
| | Girl | 5 | 33% |
| Type of school | Maintained | 6 | 40% |
| | Controlled | 7 | 47% |
| | Integrated | 2 | 13% |
| Age | P6 | 6 | 40% |
| | P7 | 9 | 60% |
| Experience of sectarian events | Had experienced | 3 | 20% |
| | Had not | 11 | 73% |
| | Don't know | 1 | 7% |
| SDQ mean scores | Emotional sympt | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| | Conduct problems | 2.4 | 1.6 |
| | Hyperactivity | 4.1 | 3.0 |
| | Peer relationship | 2.1 | 2.7 |
| | Pro-social behaviour | 7.6 | 2.1 |
| | Total difficulties | 11.1 | 8.7 |
| SDQ SCORES (n=14) | | | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal scores | 9 | 64% |
| | Borderline scores | 2 | 14% |
| | Abnormal scores | 3 | 22% |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal scores | 7 | 50% |
| | Borderline scores | 4 | 29% |
| | Abnormal scores | 3 | 21% |
| SDQ hyperactivity/inattention | Normal scores | 10 | 72% |
| | Borderline scores | 2 | 14% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 14% |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal scores | 10 | 72% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 7% |
| | Abnormal scores | 3 | 21% |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal scores | 11 | 79% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 7% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 14% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal scores | 9 | 64% |
| | Abnormal scores | 5 | 36% |
| Violence in Picture A | Yes | 5 | 33% |
| | No | 10 | 67% |
| Violence in Picture B | Yes | 13 | 87% |
| | No | 2 | 13% |
| TOTAL | | 15 | 100% |

Only two had coped badly with the loss/injury, and none of them felt anybody helped them cope. They were evenly split in terms of their victim/survivor identity, and their opinion on victims.

*Table 6.22: Characteristics of the parents in Type 3 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 25-30 yrs old | 4 | 27% |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 7 | 46% |
| | Over 40 yrs | 4 | 27% |
| Living with partner/spouse | Yes | 5 | 33% |
| | No | 10 | 67% |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 5 | 33% |
| | Irish | 6 | 40% |
| | British | 1 | 7% |
| | Ulster | 2 | 13% |
| | Other | 1 | 7% |
| Political identity | Unionist | 6 | 40% |
| | Nationalist | 4 | 27% |
| | Neither | 5 | 33% |
| Amount of neighbours with same religious background | All | 12 | 80% |
| | Most | 1 | 6.7% |
| | None | 1 | 6.7% |
| | Don’t have a religion | 1 | 6.7% |
| Amount of friends with same religious background | All | 8 | 53% |
| | Most | 6 | 40% |
| | Don’t have a religion | 1 | 7% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion on what the long-term policy for NI should be | Remain part of UK | 7 | 47% |
| | Reunify with Ireland | 6 | 40% |
| | DK/Other | 2 | 13% |
| How would they vote if GFA was held again today | Yes | 6 | 40% |
| | No | 4 | 27% |
| | Wouldn't vote | 2 | 13% |
| | Don't know | 3 | 20% |
| View on what would happen to future prosperity in NI, if Agreement remains in place | Increase | 6 | 40% |
| | Stay the same | 6 | 40% |
| | Don't know | 3 | 20% |
| Any stressful events recently | Yes | 4 | 27% |
| | No | 10 | 67% |
| Any close relatives killed due to the Troubles | Yes | 2 | 13% |
| | No | 13 | 87% |
| Any close relatives injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 40% |
| | No | 9 | 60% |
| Know anybody killed/injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 8 | 53% |
| | No | 6 | 40% |
| Them/partner/spouse affected by the Troubles | Yes | 8 | 53% |
| | No | 5 | 33% |
| Been affected in 2+ ways by the Troubles | Yes | 8 | 53% |
| | No | 7 | 47% |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 3 | 20% |
| | Fairly well | 4 | 27% |
| | Badly | 2 | 13% |
| | No answer/applicable | 6 | 40% |
| Anybody helped parent cope | No | 9 | 60% |
| | No answer/applicable | 6 | 40% |
| Victim/survivor identity | Victim | 3 | 20% |
| | Survivor | 3 | 20% |
| | Neither | 3 | 20% |
| | No answer/applicable | 6 | 40% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion: All those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 7 | 47% |
| | Disagree | 5 | 33% |
| | No answer | 3 | 20% |
| Opinion: All those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 8 | 53% |
| | Disagree | 6 | 40% |
| | No answer | 1 | 7% |
| GHQ-12 | <4 scores | 11 | 73% |
| | ≥4 scores | 4 | 27% |
| | Mean score | 3.1 | SD 4.1 |

**Characteristics of Type 4 dyads: Depicting no violence and no parental communication (n=24)**

As described in Table 6.23, two thirds of the children in Type 4 dyads (i.e. children who did not portray violence in any of their pictures and whose parents had not talked about their experience of the conflict, or had no experience of it) were girls. Most of them attended either a controlled (50%) or an integrated school (33%), and attended a P6 classroom (71%). Only two (8%) had had any experience of sectarian events. All except two children scored within the normal range for the SDQ total difficulties score.

As shown in Table 6.24, nearly half of the parents in this group were aged over 40 years old (n=11; 46%), and just over half were not living with their partner/spouse. The majority identified themselves as either British (n=10; 42%) or Northern Irish (n=7; 29%). Half did not identify themselves as either Unionist or Nationalist, and a third identified as Unionist. Over half believed that their neighbours shared their same religious background, while a third believed that half of their friends had a different religious background than their own. Most of them wished Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. A quarter would vote “no” to the GFA, if it were to be held again, and nearly another quarter would not vote. The majority believed that future prosperity in Northern Ireland would either increase (n=10; 42%) or stay the same (n=9; 38%). Most of these parents had not experienced any stressful event/s recently, and the majority scored less than 4 in the GHQ-12.

*Table 6.23: Characteristics of children in the Type 4 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Boy | 8 | 33% |
| | Girl | 16 | 67% |
| Type of school | Maintained | 4 | 17% |
| | Controlled | 12 | 50% |
| | Integrated | 8 | 33% |
| Age | P6 | 17 | 71% |
| | P7 | 7 | 29% |
| Experience of sectarian events | Had experienced | 2 | 8% |
| | Had not | 20 | 84% |
| | Don't know | 2 | 8% |
| SDQ mean scores | Emotional sympt | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| | Conduct problems | 1.5 | 2.0 |
| | Hyperactivity | 2.6 | 2.2 |
| | Peer relationship | 2.0 | 2.1 |
| | Pro-social behaviour | 8.5 | 2.1 |
| | Total difficulties | 8.1 | 5.7 |
| TOTAL | | 24 | 100% |
| SDQ SCORES (n=23) | | | |
| SDQ emotional symptoms | Normal scores | 20 | 87% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 4% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 9% |
| SDQ conduct problems | Normal scores | 18 | 78% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 4% |
| | Abnormal scores | 4 | 18% |
| SDQ hyperactivity/inattention | Normal scores | 21 | 91% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 9% |
| SDQ peer relationship problems | Normal scores | 16 | 70% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 4% |
| | Abnormal scores | 6 | 26% |
| SDQ pro-social behaviour | Normal scores | 21 | 92% |
| | Borderline scores | 1 | 4% |
| | Abnormal scores | 1 | 4% |
| SDQ total difficulties | Normal scores | 21 | 91% |
| | Abnormal scores | 2 | 9% |

*Table 6.24: Characteristics of the parents in Type 4 dyad*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 25-30 yrs old | 6 | 25% |
| | 31-40 yrs old | 7 | 29% |
| | Over 40 yrs | 11 | 46% |
| Living with partner/spouse | Yes | 10 | 42% |
| | No | 14 | 58% |
| National identity | Northern Irish | 7 | 29% |
| | Irish | 3 | 12% |
| | British | 10 | 42% |
| | Ulster | 2 | 8% |
| | Other | 2 | 8% |
| Political identity | Unionist | 7 | 29 |
| | Nationalist | 3 | 13 |
| | Neither | 12 | 50 |
| | DK/No answer | 2 | 8 |
| Amount of neighbours with same religious background | All | 13 | 55% |
| | Most | 2 | 8% |
| | Half | 2 | 8% |
| | None | 1 | 4% |
| | Don't have a religion | 2 | 8% |
| | Don't know | 4 | 17% |
| Amount of friends with same religious background | All | 7 | 29% |
| | Most | 7 | 29% |
| | Half | 6 | 25% |
| | Less than half | 2 | 8.5% |
| | Don't have a religion | 2 | 8.5% |
| Opinion on what the long-term policy for NI should be | Remain part of UK | 17 | 71% |
| | Reunify with Ireland | 2 | 8% |
| | Become independent | 1 | 4% |
| | DK/Other | 4 | 17% |
| How would they vote if GFA was held again today | Yes | 9 | 37% |
| | No | 6 | 25% |
| | Wouldn't vote | 5 | 21% |
| | Don't know | 4 | 17% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| View on what would happen to future prosperity in NI, if Agreement remains in place | Increase | 10 | 42% |
| | Decrease | 3 | 12% |
| | Stay the same | 9 | 38% |
| | Don't know | 2 | 8% |
| Any stressful events recently | Yes | 2 | 8% |
| | No | 15 | 63% |
| | No answer | 7 | 29% |
| Any close relatives killed due to the Troubles | Yes | 4 | 17% |
| | No | 20 | 83% |
| Any close relatives injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 25% |
| | No | 17 | 71% |
| Know anybody killed/injured due to the Troubles | Yes | 14 | 58% |
| | No | 10 | 42% |
| Them/partner/spouse affected by the Troubles | Yes | 6 | 25% |
| | No | 18 | 75% |
| Been affected in 2+ ways by the Troubles | Yes | 9 | 37.5% |
| | No | 15 | 62.5% |
| How coped with loss/injury | Well | 9 | 38% |
| | Fairly well | 2 | 8% |
| | No answer/applicable | 13 | 54% |
| Anybody helped parent cope | Yes | 2 | 8% |
| | No | 10 | 42% |
| | No answer/applicable | 12 | 50% |
| Victim/survivor identity | Victim | 1 | 4% |
| | Survivor | 3 | 13% |
| | Neither | 8 | 33% |
| | No answer/applicable | 12 | 50% |
| Opinion: All those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally | Agree | 10 | 42% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 2 | 8% |
| | Disagree | 11 | 46% |
| | No answer | 1 | 4% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opinion: All those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally | Agree | 15 | 63% |
| | Neither agree nor dis | 2 | 8% |
| | Disagree | 6 | 25% |
| | No answer | 1 | 4% |
| GHQ-12 | <4 scores | 21 | 87.5% |
| | ≥4 scores | 3 | 12.5% |
| | Mean score | 1.4 | 3.0 |

Over a third had been affected in more than one way by the conflict; over half knew somebody that had been killed or injured due to the Troubles; four had had close relative/s killed; a quarter had had one/several relative/s injured; and a quarter had been directly affected (or their partner/spouse had). They had coped well or fairly well with the loss/injury, and most did not identify themselves as either a victim or a survivor. They were fairly divided in their opinion on whether all those killed due to the conflict should be seen as victims equally; but most agreed with the statement that all those bereaved should be treated equally, with only a quarter disagreeing.

**Comparing the different types of dyads**

***Child's gender:*** While Type 2 and Type 4 dyads included more girls than boys (69% and 67% vs. 31% and 33%), Type 3 dyads consisted of a larger proportion of boys than girls (67% vs. 33%), and Type 1 dyads had the same number of boys and girls. Therefore, although violence was mostly depicted by boys, an equal number of boys and girls drew violence and had parents that talked to them about their experiences of conflict. This might suggest that boys, more so than girls, had been influenced by violence when thinking about their local past and present lives, even if they had not heard about the conflict through their parents.

***Child's age:*** While more children in Type 1 dyads attended P7 classes than P6 classes, Type 4 dyads consisted of considerably more children attending P6 classes, and Type 2 and 3 dyads had similar numbers of each. This finding confirms that a larger number of older children drew violence, in contrast with a slightly smaller number of younger children.

***Type of school:*** Most children in the integrated school were either in Type 4 (n=8) or Type 2 dyads (n=6), in which violence was not depicted. Most children in maintained schools were part of Type 1 (n=8) or Type 3 dyads (n=6), in which violence was portrayed.

***Child's experience of sectarian events:*** Most children did not experience any sectarian event/s themselves, according to their parents. There was no specific difference in the different dyad types.

***SDQ scores:*** Children in Type 1 and Type 4 dyads had the lowest SDQ average scores (7.9 & 8.1 respectively), while children in Type 3 dyads had the highest mean score (11.1), with 36% (n=5) presenting abnormal scores. In other words, children depicting violence but whose parents had not talked to them appeared to be more likely to suffer from behavioural problems.

***Living arrangements:*** Most parents in Type 1 (67%) and over half of those in Type 2 dyads (56%) were living with a partner/ spouse, while over half of the parents in Type 4 (58%) and most of those in Type 3 dyads (67%) were not living with one. In other words, more parents who had had some sort of communication with their children about their experiences were living with a partner than those who did not.

***Residential and social segregation:*** Most parents in all the dyad types lived in neighbourhoods of the same religious background as themselves, while Type 4 dyads included the largest proportion of parents who had more friends of a different religious background.

***National and political identity:*** The dyad type with more parents identifying themselves as Northern Irish was Type 1 (44%). Type 1 and Type 2 dyads had a similar number of parents identifying themselves as either Irish or British, while Type 3 dyads had a larger proportion identifying themselves as Irish (40%), and Type 4 included the largest proportion of those identifying themselves as British (42%). Most parents in Type 2 (56%) and half of those in Type 4 dyads identified themselves as neither Unionist nor Nationalist.

***Political opinion:*** Most parents in Type 1 dyads would either vote “yes” if the GFA was to be held again (44%) or they did not know (44%); and believed that if the Agreement remains in place, future prosperity in NI would either increase (33%), stay the same (33%), or they did not know (28%). Most parents in Type 2 dyads would also vote “yes” (37%) or would not vote (25%); and believed that if the Agreement remains in place, future prosperity in Northern Ireland will stay the same (31%) or they did not know (44%). In Type 3 and 4 dyads, parents would either vote “yes” (40% & 37%) or vote “no” (27% & 25%), and a considerable number would not vote (13% and 21%); and regarding future prosperity if the Agreement remains, they believed it would either increase (40% & 42%) or stay the same (40% & 38%).

**Parental mental health:** The lowest average GHQ-12 score was for parents in Type 4 dyads (GHQ score 1.4), with 12.5% scoring 4 or over, and parents in Type 1 dyads (GHQ score 2.2), with 28% scoring 4 or over, while the highest were for parents in Type 2 dyads (GHQ score 4.4), with 56% scoring 4 or over, and Type 3 (GHQ score 3.1), with 27% scoring 4 or over. Thus, neither parental communication about violent experiences by itself nor children depicting violence by itself explained parents’ poor mental health, but the combination of children not drawing violence and parents talking about it; and children drawing violence but parents not talking about it was related to GHQ score. Most parents in Type 3 (67%) and Type 4 dyads (63%) had not experienced any stressful events recently, whereas half in Type 1 (50%) and nearly half in Type 2 dyads (37.5%) had experienced stressful events recently.

***Parental experience of the conflict:*** Most parents in Type 1 (67%) and Type 2 (81%) and over half in Type 3 (53%) and Type 4 dyads (58%) knew somebody killed/injured due to the conflict; half in Type 1, about two fifths in Type 2 (37.5%) and Type 3 (40%), and a fourth in Type 4 dyads had had a close relative injured. A considerable number in Type 1 (33%) and a few in Type 3 (13%) and Type 4 dyads (17%) had had a close relative killed; and over half of the parents in Type 3 (53%) and a considerable number in Type 1 (33%), Type 2 (25%) and Type 4 dyads (25%) had been directly affected themselves or their partner/spouse had. Over half of those in Type 1 (56%) and Type 3 (53%) had been affected by the Troubles in more than one single way, whereas less than two fifths in Type 2 and Type 4 had.

***Coping with the loss:*** In Type 1 and Type 4 dyad, all the parents who answered had coped either well or fairly well with the violent event/s, whereas a few in Type 2 and Type 3 dyads had coped badly. For the vast majority of parents in Type 1, Type 2 and Type 4 dyads, and for all the parents who answered in Type 3, nobody helped them cope.

***Victim identity:*** Most parents in Type 1 (39%), Type 2 (50%) and Type 4 dyads (33%) identified themselves as neither a victim nor a survivor, whereas the same amount of parents in Type 3 dyads identified themselves as victim (20%), survivor (20%) or neither (20%).

***Opinion on victims:*** Parents in Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 dyads were divided in their opinion of whether all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally, with nearly equal proportions either agreeing or disagreeing. A slightly larger proportion of parents in Type 3 dyads agreed rather than disagreed with that. The majority of parents in Type 1 (66%) and Type 4 (63%) and over half of those in Type 3 dyads (53%) agreed with the statement that all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally, whereas half in Type 2 dyads agreed, a quarter disagreed and the other quarter neither agreed nor disagreed. This suggests that parents in Type 2 dyads (i.e. those who had talked about their experiences but their children had not depicted violence) appeared to be more likely to support a “hierarchy of victimhood” than parents in any other dyad type, whereas those in Type 3 dyads (i.e. those who had not talked about their experiences but their children had depicted violence) seem to be the ones holding a more inclusive view.

***Communication with children:*** Barely any differences between Type 1 and Type 2 dyads were found in terms of how parents talked about their experiences with their children. Most parents in Type 1 and Type 2 dyads either had an open conversation about their experience (with the child asking questions and them responding) (50% & 50%), or made a comment or briefly mentioned a person or incident (39% & 37.5%). Most parents in Type 1 dyads talked about their experiences a few times (67%), a few did once or twice or whenever the child asks them (33%), whereas half of the parents in Type 2 dyads did once or twice and half did a few times.

Most parents in Type 1 dyads (67%) and half of the parents in Type 2 dyads found it easy to talk to their children, while only 12.5% in Type 2 and 22% in Type 1 dyads found it difficult, and 37.5% in Type 2 dyads found it neither easy nor difficult.

***Depicting violence:*** All the children in Type 1 and all the children except for two in Type 3 dyads depicted violence in their Picture B. However, only one in Type 1 depicted it in Picture A, in contrast with five in Type 3.

## 6. THE CASE STUDIES

In this section, a case study is selected from each type of child-parent dyad, and it is thoroughly illustrated. It is then followed by a discussion of major topics uncovered in each case description.

### Case of Type 1: Chelsea

Chelsea is a girl attending a P6 classroom in a controlled school in an urban area, which had been heavily affected by the conflict and divided by peace walls. Her mother is between 25 and 30 years old, and lives with her three children and partner/spouse. They live in a mostly Protestant area, with all her neighbours and friends being of the same religious background as them. Her mother identifies herself as British and Unionist, and would like Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. She would vote "yes" to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), if it was to be held again, because of the 'safer environment' she believes it creates, although she believes that if the GFA remains, future prosperity in Northern Ireland will stay the same. She has not experienced any stressful event/s recently, and her general mental health does not appear to be problematic, with a GHQ-12 score of 1.

Close relative/s of Chelsea's mother was/were injured in the Shankill bomb in 1993, and she knew other people who were either killed or injured in the incident. She believes she has coped fairly well with this, although nobody helped her cope. She feels she can talk freely to her family about it. She identifies herself as a survivor rather than a victim.

In terms of gender attitudes, Chelsea's mother believes that 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home', but neither agree nor disagree with the statement that 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family'.

In terms of her opinion on victims of the Troubles, she strongly disagrees with the statement that all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally and disagrees with the statement that all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally.

Chelsea's mother has had open conversations about her experience of the Troubles with her daughter a few times. She finds it a bit easy to talk to her. She tells her children 'how lucky they are to play on the streets, without being soldiers and bomb scares'. She is not sure if somebody else has talked to Chelsea about the Troubles. Chelsea herself has had experience of sectarian events. Once, 'driving to watch the 12th celebrations, there was trouble on the streets with road blocks from Catholics.' She explains how her 'children were frightened' by it.

Chelsea showed to be aware of sectarian tensions between the two communities, as she drew a so-called "peace wall" in Picture A (Figure 6.1):

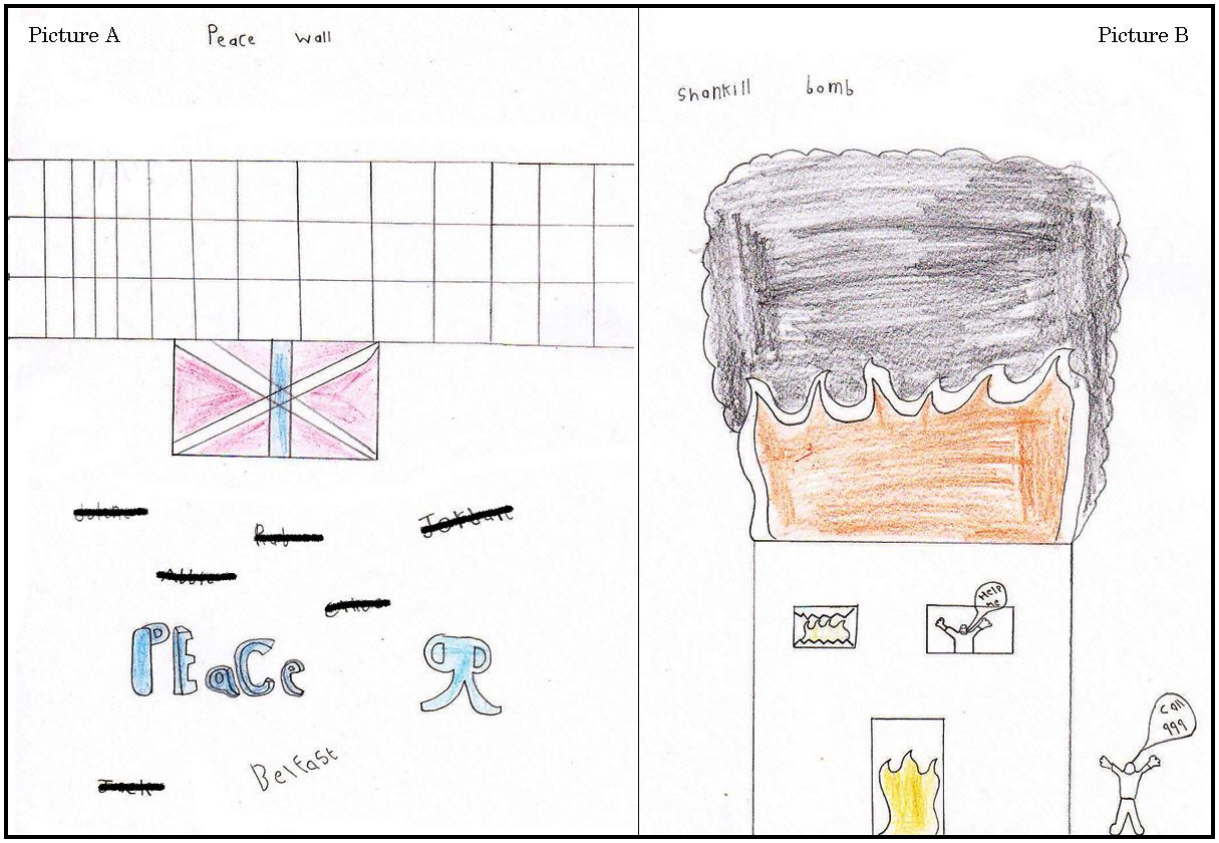
> *'I drew the peace wall, that separates the Protestants and Catholics, so it brings peace, and people write their name on it.'*

This reflects the normalisation of peace walls and divisions between the two main communities within the area (see next sub-section). In Picture B, she drew the Shankill bomb incident, where her mother had a relative (or more) injured, although she explains that it was her dad who told her about it (Figure 6.1):

> *'That one is about the Shankill bomb, my daddy told me about, because two men stopped and went into the shop, and put a bomb in it.'*

In terms of her behaviour as reported by her mother, Chelsea scored within the normal range for all the scales in the SDQ, except for the peer relationships problems scale, for which she showed a borderline score.

*Figure 6.1: Chelsea's Picture A and Picture B*




**Discussing Chelsea's case: The normalisation of sectarian division**

Chelsea's Picture A might suggest that she equates peace with walls separating communities, which protect "her" community from the violence emanating from the "other" community. She appears to understand sectarian division as a given, as something normal and current. That might be partly because she has experienced it first-hand ('driving to watch the 12th July celebrations' and being 'trouble in the streets'). Recent research has investigated children and young people's perspectives on the "peace walls" in Belfast; and revealed six different discourses that the participating youths living in interface areas used as part of their responses: inclusionary walls; exclusionary walls; necessary walls; ineffective walls; temporary walls; and invisible walls (Leonard & McKnight, 2011). To some extent, Chelsea appears to use two of these discourses (i.e. exclusionary walls and necessary walls). On one hand, she understands the wall as 'separating the Protestants and the Catholics', thus it keeps some people in and others out. In other words, the wall 'formed a defensive architecture which facilitated inward-looking tendencies and reproduced and, at times, reinforced ethno-national identities' (Leonard & McKnight, 2011, p. 574). On the other

hand, although she did not seem to feel under threat (of violence/conflict), she regards the wall as a necessity in order to 'bring peace'.

Chelsea's case is also an example of the transmission of past collective stories, and memories of trauma from one generation (who directly experienced it) to another (who did not). The Shankill bomb has become a reference point in the collective memory of the working-class Protestant community of West Belfast. Chelsea's mother lost relatives in the incident, which happened in 1993 (when a bomb left by the IRA exploded in a fish shop in the Shankill Road, killing nine civilians, including two children). Local stories about what happened in a particular area play an important role in developing a living sense of local identity. In this case, this local story is also the story of the personal memory of Chelsea's parents, which is shared within the family, and thus told to Chelsea, exemplifying the interrelation between personal and collective memories and the relationship between memory and place. Thus, stories of personal memories become a key component of a collective memory through which a shared identity is created (Dawson, 2007).

**Case of Type 2: Laura**

Laura is a girl attending a P6 classroom in the participant integrated school situated in a village in a rural area, which had been virtually untouched by the violence of the Troubles. Her mother is between 31 and 40 years of age, living with her two children and partner/spouse in a village, in a fairly mixed area, with less than half of her neighbours being of the same religious background as her (i.e. Catholic). However, most of her friends would be. She identifies herself as Northern Irish and as neither Unionist nor Nationalist, and would like Northern Ireland to reunify with the rest of Ireland. She shows a positive attitude to the GFA, as she would vote "yes", if it was to be held again, because 'to vote is the only way we can make a difference'; and she believes that future prosperity in Northern Ireland would increase if the Agreement remains in place. She appears to be healthy in terms of mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12, as she scored 0.

During the Troubles, when Laura's mother was approximately 12 years old, she was intimidated by the British army. She felt she coped fairly well with these incidents, and although nobody helped her cope, she felt she could talk freely to her family. She does not consider herself to be either a victim or a survivor.

Laura's mother appears to hold quite progressive attitudes in terms of gender, as she strongly agrees with the statement that 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home'; and strongly disagrees with the statement that 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family'.

In terms of her opinion on victims of the Troubles, she disagrees with the statement that all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally, and with the statement that all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally.

Laura's mother has made a comment about the Troubles or briefly mentioned something/someone in relation to the conflict to her daughter, or in the presence of her, a few times. She finds it neither easy nor difficult to talk to her. She explains that she likes to explain to her daughter exactly why the Troubles started and continued for so long, as she thinks 'it is important for her to know her Irish history.' However, she finds it difficult to try 'to explain about innocent women, men and children being murdered (e.g. the Omagh bomb)'. According to the mother, Laura's father has also talked to Laura about the conflict, although not often, in particular 'how things were so different on the north coast compared to mid Ulster'. According to her mother, Laura has had no experience of sectarian event/s herself.

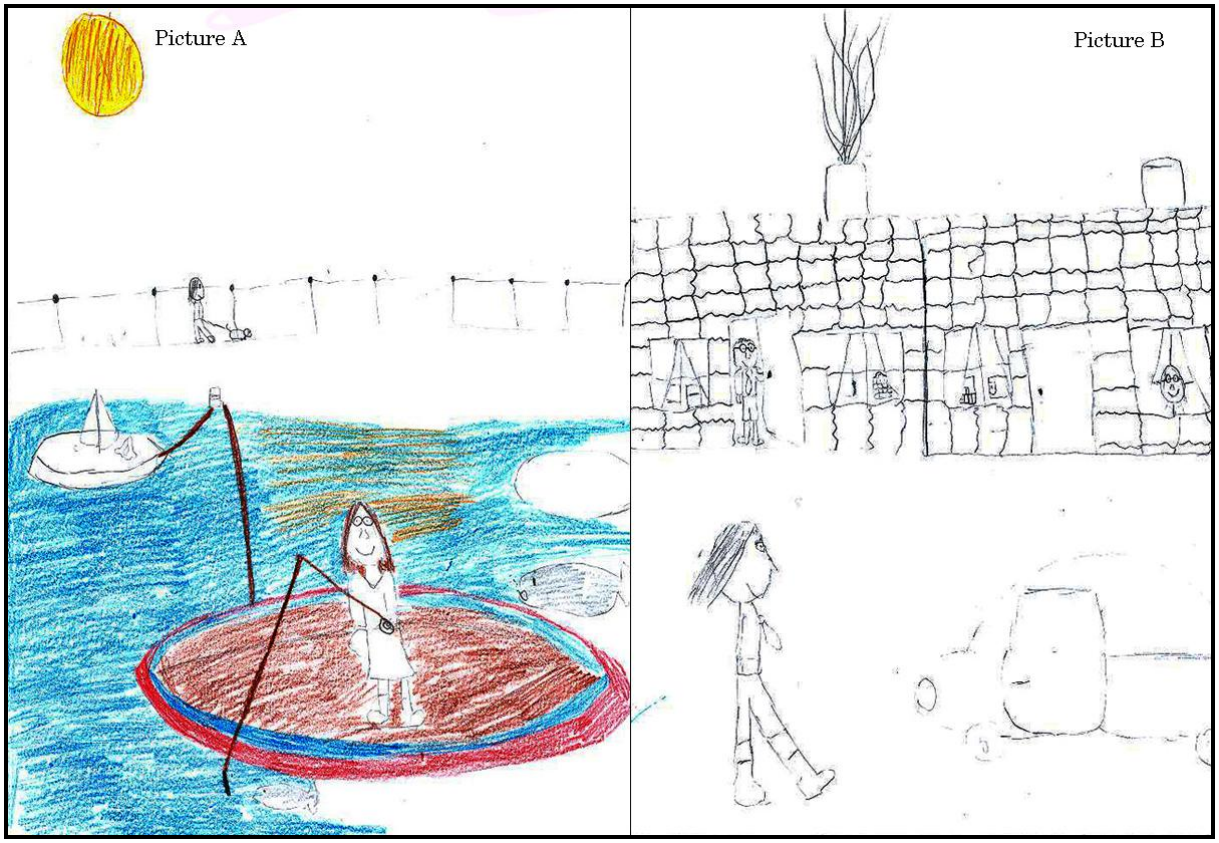
Laura depicted herself doing one of her hobbies, i.e. fishing, in her picture A, about growing up in the area. She also drew the local area, and the nature that surrounds it (Figure 6.2):

> *'It's a harbour, and there is me standing fishing and er… somebody taking my dog for a walk.'*

As for her picture B, on the past, despite her parents having talked to her about the conflict a few times, she chose not to draw about that, but about her grandparents and when they met (Figure 6.2):

*'Well, there is my grandda when he was young, and there is my nana, and they met. And that's where my grandda lived and that's where my nana lived, so they got together.'*

*Figure 6.2: Laura's Picture A and Picture B*




In terms of her behaviour as reported by her mother, Laura scored within the normal range for all the scales in the SDQ.

**Discussing Laura's case: The influence of social context**

In contrast with Chelsea, Laura lives in a mixed rural area that was relatively untouched by the violence of the conflict, and attends an integrated school. Although her parents were affected by the conflict, have talked to her about it, and hold views supporting a hierarchy of victims, sectarian division and political strife have no relevance in Laura's present-day life in her local rural village in Northern Ireland; and she does not seem to be much interested in that "troubled" past, as she chose to draw the more "positive" story of her grandparents meeting up and how 'they got together'.

Laura's case appears to speak about the influence of integrated education, peers, and the area where one grows up becoming more significant than parental influence.

*'Basically, it's [the conflict] just created a division, you know. Our town is split, like, right down the middle. If you are wearing a uniform in a different community, you could get beat up. Growing up here, if there weren't the Troubles, there'd be more mixed schools.'* (Lee, Year 11, cited in Leitch, 2008, p. 45)

Lee (in the above extract from Leitch's study) and Laura seem to inhabit very different social worlds, despite both growing up in Northern Ireland. For Lee, the reality of social division and segregation is very much current to his daily life, whereas for Laura, it is not. Lee believes that if the conflict did not exist, there would be a larger number of integrated schools in his area. Laura attends an integrated school, and lives in a mixed area. In sum, Laura's case speaks about the influence of her immediate social context to the views she holds, and the stories she evokes when prompted. That does not necessarily mean that she has forgotten the stories she has been told by her parents, but she might not feel as "connected" to them as other children living in highly socially divided areas, and might need more direct prompting to call them to mind.

**Case of Type 3: Mark**

Mark is a boy attending a P7 classroom in the all-boys maintained school in an urban disadvantaged area, which had been heavily affected by the conflict. His mother is aged between 31 and 40. She lives with her two children on her own in inner city Belfast, in a segregated area, with all of her neighbours and most of her friends being of the same religious background as herself (i.e. Catholic). She identifies herself as Irish and Nationalist, and would like Northern Ireland to reunify with the rest of Ireland. She does not have a clear attitude towards the GFA, as she answered that she does not know what she would vote if it was to be held again, and does neither know what would happen to future prosperity in Northern Ireland, if it was to remain in place. She has not experienced any stressful event/s recently, and her general mental health does not appear to be problematic, with a GHQ-12 score of 1.

In the 1980s, one or more of the close relatives of Mark's mother had been injured and other people who she knew had been either injured or killed due to the conflict. Moreover, in that decade, she had been affected by police raids. She believes she has

coped well with these conflict-related incidents, and although nobody helped her cope, she feels she can talk freely to her family about it. She identifies as neither a victim nor a survivor.

Mark's mother appears to hold quite progressive attitudes in terms of gender, as she strongly agrees with the statement that 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home'; and strongly disagrees with the statement that 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family'.

In terms of her opinion on victims of the Troubles, she agrees with the statement that all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally, and with the statement that all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally.

She does not talk to her children about the Troubles, because according to her, 'times have changed' and says that she prefers that her children 'are brought up in peace'. She believes nobody else has ever talked to her son about the conflict. According to her, Mark has had no experience of sectarian event/s himself.

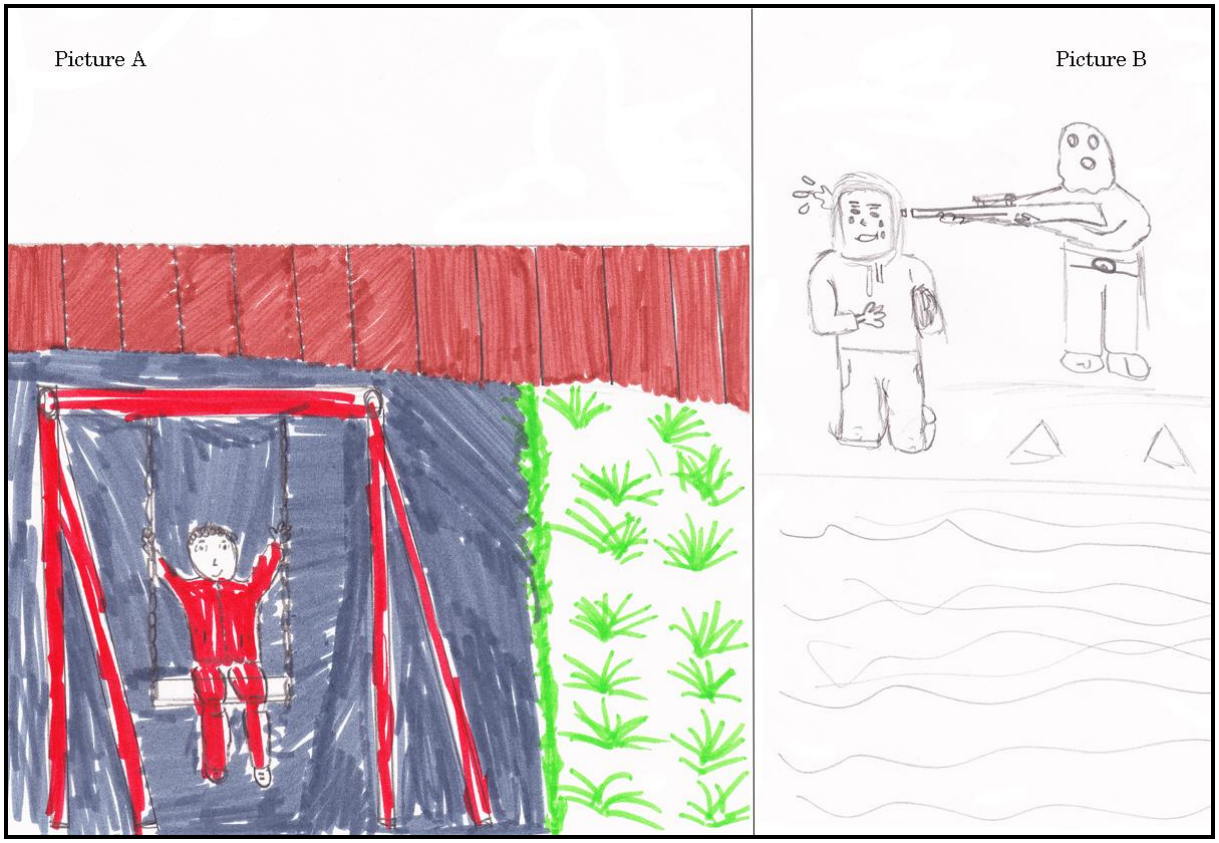
Despite this, Mark told the researcher how he actually saw disturbing violent events, when explaining his Picture B, on the past (Figure 6.3):

> Mark: *It's… a Republican hood tried to rob a house and the IRA they're shooting them. It happened years ago to people*
> Researcher: *And who told you?*
> Mark: *I've just seen it in front of me.*

However, in Picture A, he explained how things were good and peaceful for children now, as they can play, without the risk of "hoods" (Figure 6.3):

> *'It's a wee boy in the park and he can play in the park, because there's no hoods or anything about.'*

*Figure 6.3: Mark's Picture A and Picture B*




In terms of his behaviour as reported by his mother, Mark scored within the abnormal range in the SDQ. His scores fell within the abnormal range for emotional problems and peer relationship problems, within the borderline range for conduct problems, and within the normal range for hyperactivity/inattention and social behaviour.

**Discussing Mark's case: Conceptualisations of peace in a transitional society**

Although he does not use the word, to some extent, Mark describes the present as peaceful and in contrast with a violent past. He equates the violence in the past with "hoods" and paramilitaries, whereas now there are no "hoods" and consequently, the child he draws can play freely in the park. Magill and Hamber (2011) found that children and young people in Northern Ireland see youths as both peacemakers and troublemakers, as both part of the solution and part of the problem, in that some are actively perpetuating conflict and division while others are trying to move beyond the sectarian divide. The "hoods" that Mark talks about are thus the troublemakers. Young people wearing hoods are considered a threat by both adults and children/young people.

There are missing stories behind Mark's pictures, as we do not know what he means when he said he saw "it" in front of him. We cannot either be sure whether he was completely accurate when he said that, as due to the nature of this research (i.e. lack of time and space to interview each child individually), he could not be further probed, thus verification of his account is impossible. Although he might have said what he thought I wanted to or was expecting to hear, he appears to know about a "troubled" past that is not so long ago, and that has its legacies in the present. However, according to his mother, he does not know about it through her stories of personal memories, as she has not ever told him. Mark's case and that of the other children in Type 3 suggest that children have numerous information sources to avail of on their local past, and family stories are only one of them. However, the case also suggests that Mark's mother's understanding of a peaceful present ('times have changed') is accepted and assimilated by Mark, as he views contemporary Northern Ireland as a place where children can play (as they are 'brought up in peace', according to her mother). In other words, Mark's case shows how it is not only painful past memories that are transmitted within families, but also views and understandings of peace, thus bringing about some "hope" for more optimistic views of the future of Northern Ireland.

**Case of Type 4: Megan**

Megan is a girl in a P6 classroom at an all-girls maintained school, situated in a disadvantaged urban area that had been particularly affected by the violence of the Troubles. Her mother is over 40 years old, and has six children, four of them living with her in a segregated urban area, with all her neighbours and friends being of the same religious background (i.e. Catholic). She does not live with a partner/spouse. She identifies herself as Northern Irish and Nationalist, although she would like Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK. She appears to hold a positive attitude towards the GFA, as she would vote "yes" if it was to be held again, because she 'believes in peace', and thinks that future prosperity in Northern Ireland would increase if it was to remain in place. Although she has not experienced any stressful event/s recently, she appears to show poor general mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12, as she has a high score of 9.

In 1972, one or more of the close relatives of Megan's mother were injured due to the conflict. In addition, in 1973, people she knew were either killed or injured, and her

family house was raided in the 1980s. She feels that she has coped fairly well with these incidents, and although nobody has helped her cope, she feels she can talk freely to her family about what happened. She considers herself to be a survivor, rather than a victim of the conflict.

In terms of gender attitudes, Megan's mother strongly agrees with the statement that 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home', and disagrees with the statement that 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family'.

In terms of her opinion on victims of the Troubles, she agrees with the statement that all those killed/injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally, and with the statement that all those bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally.

She has not talked to Megan about her experience of the conflict, because 'it never came up' and finds it easy in general to talk to her about anything. She does not know if anybody else has talked to her about the conflict or if she has ever experienced any sectarian incident herself.

Megan appears to be happy living in Northern Ireland, as she depicts her house and talks about the park situated beside it and her friends (Figure 6.4):

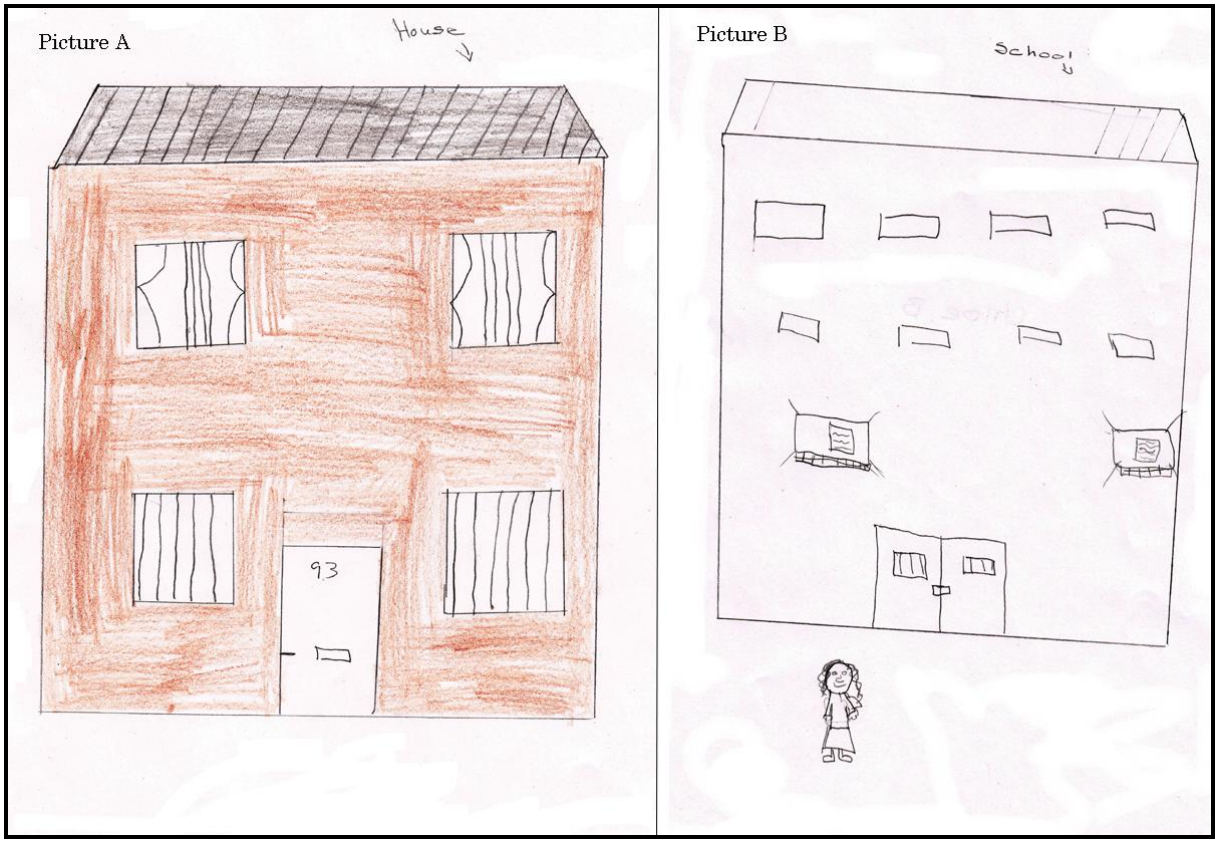
> *'I live in a house, in [address], and it's fun around there, because up the street from me, there is a park, and I sometimes go up around there, and I have some friends about my house.'*

In her picture about the past, she talks about her school, as it used to be the same school her mum used to go to (Figure 6.4):

> *'Yeah, erm… my mummy used to go to this school as well, and my friend's mummy, and it… was… She said it was a really… good school, it was her best school.'*

In terms of her behaviour as reported by her mother, Megan scored within the normal range for all the scales in the SDQ, except for the peer relationships problems scale, for which she showed an abnormal score.

*Figure 6.4: Megan's Picture A and Picture B*




**Discussing Megan's case: The "culture of silence"**

Megan appears to be proud and happy about her local area, with her house, street, friendships and school, and her roots to this community are firmly in the past, as her mother went to the same school as she does. However, her mother has some memories of not so happy times, but she has not recounted these stories to her daughter, and unsurprisingly Megan does not reflect them in her drawing. Although Megan's mother believes she has coped fairly well with these events, her mental health appears to be poor. In line with this information, it is not possible to draw conclusions of whether these experiences and her mental health are related.

Megan's case is an example of the pervasive "culture of silence" that has been exposed by others in Northern Ireland (e.g. Gilligan, 1997; Heaney, 1990), as some people choose not to tell their distressing stories, in order to cope with their experiences (i.e. as a coping strategy for both adults and children) and in case they offend or hurt somebody (Smyth, 1998). Furthermore, open discussion on the causes and consequences of social division/conflict is very much discouraged in social institutions, such as schools (Smith & Neill, 2005), and within communities and neighbourhoods. This silence is also kept sometimes, as some parents feel that by not talking about it, they "protect" their children. Megan's mother does not give this kind of explanations as to why she has not recounted her personal memories. Instead, she does not seem to give it too much significance as a topic of conversation, as 'it never came up'. However, does that mean that if it did come up, as Megan grew older, she would tell her story? The study reflected that age of the child influenced parental communication, with older children being more likely to have been approached by their parents to talk about their experiences compared to younger children, despite there only being a year difference between the two groups. That might suggest that Megan will encounter these stories, as she grows older. However, it could also mean that Megan's mother might not ever see the topic "coming up", thus choosing to maintain this so-called "culture of silence" within the family.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Trans-generational transmission of trauma is supposed to occur when parents affected by traumatic events transmit their "psychological burden" (Kellermann, 2001) onto their children. Parents in this study had been affected by traumatic events (see Chapter 5), yet the process of transmission was much more complex than what Kellermann and others (e.g. Daud *et al.*, 2005; Fonagy, 1999; Srour, 2005) had proposed. This chapter attempted to answer how children's views of their country's past and present were influenced by their parents' experiences of a "troubled" past.

By combining the data gathered from the participating children and their parents, links between parents' and children's views and attitudes emerged, despite the fact that due to small numbers, statistical significance calculations were often not appropriate. Table 6.25 reveals the variables that appeared to make some difference to whether children

drew violence in their pictures or not; whether children depicted policing or not; and whether they portrayed sectarian awareness in their pictures or not.

*Table 6.25: Variables influencing children's depiction of these themes in their pictures*

| **Violence** | **Policing** | **Awareness of sectarianism** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. National identity | 1. Living with partner | 1. Parents' age |
| 2. Political identity | 2. Attitudes to GFA | 2. National identity |
| 3. Attitudes to GFA | 3. Relative killed | 3. Political identity |
| 4. Gender attitudes | 4. Victim identity | 4. GHQ-12 |
| 5. Experience of stressful events | 5. GHQ-12 | |
| 6. Victim identity | 6. Communication diff. | |
| 7. Communication with child | | |

Parents' political identities and attitudes had some influence in terms of what the children portrayed, as children whose parents identified themselves as Irish or Northern Irish, and/or as Nationalist or Unionist were more likely to depict violence in their pictures than children whose parents did not; and children whose parents identified themselves as Irish and/or Nationalist were more likely to portray awareness of sectarianism than those whose parents did not. In addition, parental experience of recent stressful events and direct and multiple experiences of the conflict appeared to make a difference to whether the children depicted violence or not, with more children portraying this theme if their parents had those experiences. Children whose parents had had a close relative killed and/or identified themselves as victims were also more likely to depict policing. Parental communication with the child about own conflict-related experience emerged to be the most influential variable, as a larger percentage of parents who had talked to their child about it depicted violence in one/both pictures, especially in Picture B, than those whose parents claimed not to have done so.

However, although the children whose parents talked to them about their past violent experiences were significantly more likely to depict violence in their Picture B, 16 children whose parents also did talk to them about it chose not to draw violence in any of their pictures, and 15 children depicted violence in one or both of their pictures but their parents claimed not to have talked to them about their conflict-related experiences. The four types of child-parent dyads (created on the basis of combining children's depiction of violence and parents' talking about conflict-related events that

they experienced) differed in terms of the child's gender, age, type of school, SDQ scores, parents' living arrangements, national/political identity, political attitudes, parents' mental health, parents' experiences of the conflict and their attitudes towards victims. Thus, the parent-child dyads and detailed case studies illustrated the complexity of the process of transmission of stories and memories, since:

- children are active social agents that learn, absorb, forget, transform or ignore the messages (stories, views and attitudes) that their parents and significant others pass on;
- children have their own daily experiences of growing up in a divided (and sometimes violent) society;
- children draw on a variety of sources that enable them to form their own views on their local past and present, and these sources are not only their parents/families, but also: their peers, the media, the cultural symbols around them (e.g. murals and graffiti, memorial sites, flags, "peace walls", etc.), the school, including curriculum and teachers, etc.; and
- parents and families choose what stories to tell to their children and when to tell them, depending on a range of variables, as they also have a variety of views/attitudes on whether and how the past should be remembered and transmitted to the younger generations.

## 8. SUMMARY

Children hold different views on their lives now, their recent local past, and how things have changed, and although these views are not only influenced by what their parents have told them, sometimes there seems to be a relationship between the two. This chapter has revealed these not-so-straightforward relationships that reflect the complexity of the transmission of memories between parents and children within a transitional society. Next chapter attempts to answer the research questions posed in this study, drawing conclusions based on the findings presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, the findings of the study are discussed and situated within the context of existing literature (reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2). Each research question will be discussed in turn:

1. How do children born in post-agreement Northern Ireland perceive (i.e. depict) Northern Ireland's present and its recent "troubled" past? This question, which was examined in detail in Chapter 4, will be first discussed (The Children's Drawings).
2. To what extent (if any) do parents' experiences/opinions of the Troubles and peace process influence their children's understandings? This question, which was explored in Chapters 5 and 6, will then be addressed (Merging the data: Trans-generational transmission?).
3. Do girls and boys differ in their perceptions? (if so, how?) and do parents talk about their experiences or not depending on their child's gender? This question will be also discussed (Gender and its effects).

Finally, the implications of this study are outlined, especially in terms of the contribution the study makes to the theory of trans-generational transmission of trauma, but also in terms of parenting and education policy and practice. In addition, some general observations of the study are provided.

## 2. THE CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

*'But what is peace? Is peace simply the absence of war? The term for peace as simply the absence of armed conflict and direct violence is called a negative peace. On the other hand, a positive peace is one which entails the presence and promotion of social justice. This distinction is critical, because it is often social injustice which contributes to the outbreak of conflict in the first place.'* (Dupuy & Peters, 2010, pp.103-104)

Studies that have focused on children's understandings of war and peace have concluded that children often associate peace with what it is not (i.e. they talk about the

absence of war), rather than with what it is; while reflecting a “concrete” understanding of war, emphasising its violent activities, and negative emotions and consequences (Walker *et al.*, 2003). However, do children in this study view Northern Ireland now as a “peaceful” society? Judging by the themes illustrated in their pictures on the present-day of Northern Ireland (Pictures A), this might be the case for many of the participating children (as 88% depicted “positive elements” in that picture). In their Pictures A, many children (45%) depicted positive actions, such as playing or being nice to other people; which in other studies have been found to be attributed to the concept of peace. For instance, in a study on children’s understandings of the concepts of peace and war in the United States, peace was associated with ‘interpersonal interactions: being friends, shaking or holding hands, and giving to or helping another or playing together’ (Walker *et al.*, 2003, p.194). Walker *et al.* (2003) found that 48% of the peace drawings reflected this theme, while 42% reflected the theme of peace as negative peace (i.e. what peace is not; peace as inactivity, the absence of conflict, or the end of war). Similarly, in this study, 47% depicted negation of war/violence in their Picture A.

Having said this, the children’ drawings suggested that in certain areas, despite the political “peace” process, some children still perceive violence, sectarian division, and policing as part of their every-day lives in their neighbourhood (i.e. 9% portrayed violence, 8% policing, 4% awareness of sectarianism in their Picture A). In only a few cases in this study, children appeared to be involved in the violence, in particular, vandalising churches and throwing bricks, paint bombs and other objects at the police. On other occasions, children were witnesses of the violence or affected by it in other ways, such as the girl who had asthma and could not breathe when the church was regularly set on fire. However, the study showed how these events, especially rioting, appeared to be localised to certain socially disadvantaged areas, since none of the children in the rural integrated school depicted any such events in their pictures.

Thus, the vast majority of children in the study depicted their own and their predecessors’ lives in a positive light, and multiple elements of peace and hope appeared in their drawings, which could arguably be seen as ‘normal’ childhood drawings. In fact, even children living in the areas worst affected by the conflict emphasised the positive aspects of growing up in their neighbourhood, enjoying activities like playing or swimming. This ties in with findings from a survey of 442 young people attending secondary and grammar schools in Northern Ireland, in which over

70% of the participants described Belfast as a good place to grow up in, with one of the main reasons being family and friendship ties (Leonard & McKnight, 2010).

As for children's understanding of their most recent local history, many participants seemed confused, and for some, it appeared to be an issue far from their minds. A "culture of silence" about the conflict and about families' experience of the violence (Gilligan, 1997; Smyth, 1998) appeared to emerge as a potential hypothesis for the absence of certain themes in most of the participants' Pictures B (i.e. only 36% of children portrayed violence in that picture). The data suggested that many children seemed to know nothing or very little of the Troubles, some even confusing it with World War II (i.e. only 10 children specifically mentioned the Troubles or a Troubles-related event). Similarly, in Magill *et al.*'s (2009) study, many of the 11-year-olds interviewed in Northern Ireland 'indicated that they were either confused or not sure about why the conflict had started' and more than half in this age group 'demonstrated a lack of general awareness concerning the Troubles' (p. 48). When creating their pictures of the past, children in this study drew from and relied on what they had learnt in the classroom (e.g. the Titanic, World War II, etc.), their peers' drawings and remarks while drawing, what they were told or heard from their parents, museums, the audiovisual and digital media.

Children's drawings differed depending on the child's gender, age and type of school they attended, but similarities within the groups were also found (as most of them depicted positive elements in their drawings of growing up in Northern Ireland now). Gender issues will be addressed later in this chapter. In terms of age, a higher percentage of older children depicted violence and awareness of sectarian elements compared to younger children. To some extent, this supports findings from earlier research that identified age as a factor influencing children's understandings of peace and war (Cooper, 1965; Alvik, 1968; Haavelsrud, 1970), and as a factor influencing children's understandings of social categories and development of their sectarian identities (Cairns, 1987; Connolly & Maginn, 1999; Connolly & Healey, 2004). As for schooling, a higher proportion of children living in the urban area and attending segregated education depicted violence, policing, and awareness of sectarianism compared to children living in the rural area and attending an integrated school. These findings point clearly towards the influence of age and education when it comes to perceptions of political violence vs. peace in a transitional society.

One of the main differences between the present research and that conducted by previous researchers in the area was the fact that the topics for the drawings were very carefully designed not to sensitise the children to issues related to the conflict or community relations. It is therefore not surprising that the findings reported here are in some contrast to those reported by others, for example, those who asked children to draw pictures of "war and peace" (e.g. Cairns, 1987; McLernon & Cairns, 2006). As children were not sensitised to Troubles-related issues, violence and conflict was not at the forefront of most children's minds when describing the present and past of Northern Ireland. In fact, the most salient aspects of their lives that appeared in the majority of their drawings and comments were instead their families, homes, schools, and local area. As such, the present research calls into question some of the previous conclusions regarding the need for continued narrative of the conflict and the notion of protracted issues of forgiveness (McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, & Smith, 2004).

## 3. MERGING THE DATA: TRANS-GENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION?

Trans-generational transmission of memories and "traumatic" experiences in any war-torn or "post-conflict" society is a complex phenomenon, thus the question to be asked is also complicated: If transmission occurs, which kinds of parental experiences of the conflict influence the views of children, in which ways, under which circumstances? (Kellermann, 2001) Definitive conclusions about the process through which this occurs (or not) cannot be drawn from this study, but some insight into this phenomenon is provided here.

In terms of transmission of the psychological effects of exposure to political violence, some of the findings from the parents' questionnaire appear to support the hypothesis that parents' poor mental health impacts negatively on children's emotional/social wellbeing. This was manifested in significant correlations between parents' mental health, as measured by the GHQ-12, and children's behaviours, as measured by the SDQ, especially in the case of parents who had had some exposure to the political violence (although the correlation coefficients were relatively small, between 25% and 38%) (see Chapter 5). In Northern Ireland, Merrilees *et al.* (2011) also found associations between mothers' mental health and their child's psychological adjustment, as measured with the instruments used here.

On the other hand, a range of local studies (e.g. Kelly, 2002; Magill *et al.*, 2009; McAllister *et al.*, 2009; Smyth, 1998; Smyth *et al.*, 2004b) suggested that stories about the past are passed down within families (and communities), sometimes feeding sectarian attitudes, fear, and anger among the younger generations and perpetuating conflict. In this study, some evidence of transmission of personal memories of violent events between parents and children was found, as over half of parents who had some experience of the conflict (54%) stated that they had talked to their children about these memories. Yet, some parents were reluctant to talk within the family, and they gave a variety of reasons for that (e.g. protecting their children from the hurt, or child being too young to know). Similar differences among parents between either talking about violent experiences or being unwilling to tell their story have been found in other studies (e.g. Magill *et al.*, 2009).

Parental communication with the child about conflict-related experiences emerged as a significant variable in terms of children's depiction of violence, i.e. a larger percentage of children whose parents had talked to them about it drew violence in one/both pictures, especially in Picture B, than those whose parents claimed not to have done so (see Chapter 6). However, this process appeared to be deeply complex, as there were a considerable number of children who depicted violence despite their parents not having talked to them about their conflict-related experiences, as well as a considerable number of children who had not portrayed any violence despite their parents having talked about it with them. Thus, a range of variables (e.g. child's age) seemed to affect whether parents were more or less likely to transmit their painful experiences to their offspring, and whether children were more or less likely to depict violence. The findings of this study also suggest that, in trauma caused by political violence, trans-generational transmission does not only depend on parental trauma, but also depends on parental group membership (e.g. Nationalist, Unionist, Irish, etc.). This may be different when trauma is caused by other events, e.g. car crash, where group membership is not relevant. However, it may be similar to circumstances where group membership is important, e.g. the Holocaust or Rwanda's genocide. The importance of group membership in the process of trans-generational transmission indicates clearly the role of socialisation in this process. Trans-generational transmission is not simply about verbal reports or narratives between generations, it is about a complex mesh of social experiences between and within generations.

## 4. GENDER AND ITS EFFECTS

Boys and girls expressed different understandings of their local past and present. A significantly higher proportion of boys depicted violence (49% vs. 32%, $p < 0.05$), policing (20% vs. 9%, $p < 0.05$) and awareness of sectarianism (19% vs. 7%, $p<0.05$) in one or both of their pictures compared to girls. In addition, more girls than boys represented consequences of war and violence (20% vs. 15%), while more boys than girls depicted violent/war activities (41% vs. 24.5%, $p<0.05$) and instruments of war and violence (31% vs. 19%). These findings are comparable to those of McLernon and Cairns (2001), who found that more boys (96%) than girls (84%) depicted images of weapons and soldiers, and more girls (30%) than boys (24%) drew images of negative consequences of war. Girls in this study also reported more positive elements of peace/hope than boys (95% vs. 86%, $p<0.05$), substantiating results from studies where girls were more able to define peace compared to boys (Hall, 1993; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993), and from Usta and Farver's (2005) study where children were asked to draw their neighbourhoods, and girls drew more positive elements (e.g. children playing, trees or flowers), compared to boys.

Differences were not found in terms of parents being more likely to transmit their personal memories of violent events to either their sons or daughters (see Chapter 5), or in terms of parents' gender attitudes. Thus, the differences in perceptions were not attributable to girls having less information from their parents than boys. In fact, girls appeared more likely to ignore/forget parents' stories of violence when depicting their nation's past than boys, and boys seemed to be more likely to portray violence even when their source of information was not their parents' stories (see Chapter 6). As argued in Chapter 2, traditionally, violence and masculinity have been associated in Northern Ireland, particularly within young working class men's subcultures (e.g. Reilly *et al.*, 2004; McAlister *et al.*, 2009). This study appears to partially support this argument, as it was observed in some classrooms how groups of boys influenced their fellow male peers to draw violence in their pictures, as they "proudly" (i.e. lively and loudly) talked about violent events.

To some extent, differences in boys and girls' understandings could also be attributed to their different experiences of violence (e.g. Muldoon & Trew, 2000). However, violence in Picture A was depicted by an equal number of boys and girls. In other

words, boys and girls were equally aware of violence occurring in their areas. Despite the fact that boys might be more involved with the violence as participants (as one boy in the study and no girls claimed to have taken part in breaking windows and painting graffiti), girls appear to be attentive witnesses.

Therefore, apart from gender differences, the study showed multiple similarities (e.g. similar percentages portraying positive actions and their homes), and variations among boys and among girls due to their age and type of school they attended. As argued in Chapter 2, social expectations of what is appropriate feminine or masculine behaviour (including views and beliefs) can be dependent on other variables such as age, social class or ethnicity (e.g. Connell, 2002). At times, gender expectations can be ambiguous but, even when they are obvious, not all girls and boys act according to expectations (Holmes, 2007).

In terms of the gendered nature of "talking about" the conflict to children, this could not be explored in this study, as only a few fathers were part of the sample. Are mothers more or less likely to talk to their children about the conflict than fathers are? How does the gender of the parent and the child influence on how and whether parents talk to their children about their violent experiences? These questions should be followed up in future research.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

### Implications for policy and practice

*"A big question, I think, particularly now, is how are questions of the Troubles going to be taught in schools in Northern Ireland."* (25 year-old male, Northern Ireland; cited in Magill *et al.*, 2009, p.2)

The implications for teaching from this research relate mainly to the history curriculum. Despite all students aged 5-14 following a common history curriculum, many children in the study seemed confused regarding the recent past history within their own country, with some children saying that they did not know what it was like before they were born, and others getting different events mixed up.

In the Revised Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum, history is taught as part of one of the six areas of learning, called 'The World Around Us' (CCEA, 2007), and children are encouraged to view any narrative of the past as provisional and open to question (McCully, 2010). This "rationalistic" enquiry-based model of history teaching, which is centred on the objective analysis of evidence, is the dominant approach in British schools, including those in Northern Ireland, as it was adopted in the 1991 Northern Ireland Curriculum. 'Pupils are encouraged to think critically about evidence presented to them, to see events from different perspectives and to reach conclusions based on the considerations of a range of interpretations' (Barton & McCully, 2003, p.112). Primary school children (up to the age of 11 years) are taught about the social, cultural, and economic life of people far removed in time and place (e.g. Vikings, Ancient Egyptians) or about daily life in uncontroversial contexts (e.g. in the Victorian Era or during World War II). Children do not study any political history of Ireland, Britain, and Northern Ireland until they go to secondary school (Barton & McCully, 2010) and even then, history is a compulsory subject for only three years. In the document setting out the requirements of the revised curriculum, there is mention of the Titanic and the World Wars, but no specific reference is made to the Troubles (CCEA, 2007). The curriculum, as well as studies involving teachers and history textbooks (e.g. Kitson, 2007; Schulz, 2011), reflects a reluctance to address more "sensitive" aspects of the past. Therefore, it is not surprising that primary school students 'explained that studying history meant learning about how people lived in other times and places' (Barton & McCully, 2003, p. 116) rather than about learning about local people or recent events. In the present study, children commonly represented what they had learnt in the classroom (e.g. children sweeping chimneys in Victorian Times, the Titanic, technological change, or different types of transport such as horses and carts).

The present study confirmed findings from other studies (Barton & McCully, 2003; 2010; Bell *et al.*, 2010; Magill *et al.*, 2009) that had identified a variety of sources of information about the past other than school (e.g. relatives, historic sites, peers, TV, websites and books, etc). However, there seemed to be a basic discontinuity between children's personal and family histories and the history they encounter in school lessons (Barton, 2001b). There was no evidence that the social history that children study in primary school is successful in influencing other historical perspectives (e.g. sectarian narratives from their own communities and family stories) to which children may be exposed (Barton & McCully, 2003).

Taking into account that even young children from distinct social and ethnic backgrounds know something about the past and bring different knowledge to school (Barton, 2001b), the present study raises questions such as: should children in primary school be taught about the history of their recent local past (focusing especially on the historical events that led to the development of the current social and political structure of the region)? Or is it best to leave it to parents and families to educate their young children about what happened before they were born? Or even to leave it to what they hear from peers and find out through the media? If primary schools should play a more active part, what role should they play? Is the "rationalistic" enquiry approach to history the most adequate to challenge sectarian interpretations of a troubled past to which young children might have already been exposed within their communities/families (e.g. Barton & McCully, 2003)? Or, as McCully (2010) suggests, should history teaching use personal stories to engage young people's interest and encourage them to place these accounts in their wider context? This might be a valid alternative, since if history education does not attempt to help students understand the present, there is a danger that, as students get older, they selectively use aspects of their formal education to re-enforce the popular narrative in their own community (McCully, 2010), instead of question it. Therefore, this research clearly has policy implications with regard to shaping the next generations' understanding of their local past, so they can re-imagine and create a peaceful future.

Parenting

As well as schools, the study has shown how parents have also a significant role in the transmission of historical narratives and perceptions on the past and present of a divided society such as Northern Ireland. Parents in this study showed different attitudes towards telling stories to children about own past experiences of political violence. Whereas some parents admitted having talked about it, others did not and were adamant that it was "best" not to, as some considered that these stories could "hurt" their child. Could they "hurt" children? The findings in this research are not conclusive as to whether stories could be potentially hurtful to children or not, but the data collected here would appear to suggest that not talking about own past violent experiences could be more harmful for some children than talking about it. Thus, it was found that children depicting violence but whose parents had not talked to them appeared to be more likely to suffer from behavioural problems. This has implications

for parenting, as it would suggest that the transmission of traumatic memories to children is not necessarily harmful for them, but in fact might appear potentially beneficial. Parents with experiences of the conflict need to think about whether it is best for their children to find out about violence and conflict through them or through other sources, such as peers, the media or school.

### Theoretical implications

This research has clear implications for the theory on trans-generational trauma. While the theory has so-far mostly supported the assumption that parents transmit their psychological trauma to their children, this study's findings are not as clear-cut, as they expose how children have a multitude of influences other than their parents, such as their peers, school, own experiences and the area they live in. This research shows how not all parents with experiences of conflict talk to their children about it, this depending on different factors; how children do not only hear stories from parents but also from peers, other family members, teachers or the media; how stories are sometimes forgotten, ignored or not present in the forefront of children's minds; how some children might be affected by their parents' experiences and some not. Thus, many questions surface from the study, which further qualitative research should explore: what makes children more interested or affected by their parents' stories of violent experiences? How are these stories transmitted and how do children receive, appropriate or ignore them? Do these past stories have an impact on children's lives? If so, what impact?

## 6. SUMMARY

The present study contributes to the international bodies of research into children's understandings of peace and war and into history education in "post-conflict" societies, in addition to the local literature on the impact of the Troubles and living in a divided society to children and young people's wellbeing. However, it differs from some of this research because of its methodology. While others (e.g. McLernon & Cairns, 2001) have asked children and young people about their specific perceptions of war and peace or even the "Troubles", which are concepts that children may not have been aware of before the research, the present study deliberately did not influence the

children with “loaded” stimuli, and thus it examined whether these would appear “naturally” in their depictions of their own lives and their predecessors’ lives in their country/local area. It is important that future research considers more carefully the stimuli, i.e. questions that are presented to children, before drawing conclusions about their understanding of complex issues. Moreover, drawings proved to be an appropriate research tool to uncover a wide range of views from a cohort of children growing up in the transitional phase from political violence to peace, whose parents grew up during the Troubles. By combining a range of methods and gathering the parents’ perspectives as well as the children’s, the study uncovered some of the complexities of the process of transmission of memories of conflict and violence between generations, in a society trying to leave behind over 30 years of political strife.

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# APPENDIX 1: PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Children drawing their own conclusions: Trans-generational transmission of past experiences

# Parents' questionnaire

**Child's first name _____** **Year 6 ☐ or Year 7 ☐**

## General questions

**1. What is your relationship to the child?**

Mother ☐ Father ☐ Other (please specify) _____ ☐

**2. How old are you?**

under 25 ☐ 31-40 ☐

25-30 ☐ over 40 ☐

**3. How many children do you have? _____**

**How many of them live with you? _____**

**4a. Is the area you live in …?**

Country ☐

Inner city ☐

Outskirts ☐

Village ☐

**4b. Which of these terms would best describe the area you live in?**

Mostly Protestant area ☐

Mostly Catholic area ☐

Fairly mixed ☐

Other (please specify) _____ ☐

**5. Are you living with your partner/spouse?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

## Identity

**6. If you had to choose, which one best describes the way you think of yourself?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Northern Irish | ☐ | Irish | ☐ |
| British | ☐ | Ulster | ☐ |
| English | ☐ | Scottish | ☐ |
| European | ☐ | Welsh | ☐ |
| Don't know | ☐ | Other (please specify) _____ | ☐ |

**7. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a unionist, a nationalist or neither?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unionist | ☐ | Neither | ☐ |
| Nationalist | ☐ | Don't know | ☐ |

## Opinions and views

**8. What do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be?**

| | |
|---|---|
| For it to remain part of the United Kingdom | ☐ |
| To reunify with the rest of Ireland | ☐ |
| To become an independent state | ☐ |
| Other (please specify) _____ | ☐ |
| Don't know | ☐ |

**9a. If the vote on the Good Friday Agreement was held again today, how would you vote?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | ☐ | No | ☐ |
| I wouldn't vote | ☐ | Not registered to vote | ☐ |
| Don't know | ☐ | | |

**9b. Why?** ☐

**10. If the Agreement remains in place, do you think that future prosperity in Northern Ireland will increase, decrease, or stay the same?**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase | ☐ | Decrease | ☐ | Stay the same | ☐ |
| Don't know | ☐ | | | | |

## Relationships

**11. About how many of your friends would you say are from the same religious background as you?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| All | ☐ | None | ☐ |
| Most | ☐ | Don't have a religion | ☐ |
| Half | ☐ | Not Protestant or Catholic | ☐ |
| Less than half | ☐ | Don't know | ☐ |

**12. What about your neighbours? About how many are from the same religious background as you?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| All | ☐ | None | ☐ |
| Most | ☐ | Don't have a religion | ☐ |
| Half | ☐ | Not Protestant or Catholic | ☐ |
| Less than half | ☐ | Don't know | ☐ |

## Gender attitudes

**13. Do you agree or disagree that a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | ☐ | Disagree | ☐ |
| Agree | ☐ | Strongly disagree | ☐ |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ | Can't choose | ☐ |

**14. Do you agree or disagree that a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | ☐ | Disagree | ☐ |
| Agree | ☐ | Strongly disagree | ☐ |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ | Can't choose | ☐ |

**15. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)**

**How has your health been in general over the last few weeks? Have you recently:** *(underline or circle your answer)*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing? | Better than usual | Same as usual | Less than usual | Much less than usual |
| 2. lost much sleep over worry? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 3. felt that you are playing a useful part in things? | More so than usual | Same as usual | Less so than usual | Much less than usual |
| 4. felt capable of making decisions about things? | More so than usual | Same as usual | Less so than usual | Much less than usual |
| 5. felt constantly under strain? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 6. felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 7. been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities? | More so than usual | Same as usual | Less so than usual | Much less than usual |
| 8. been able to face up to your problems? | More so than usual | Same as usual | Less so than usual | Much less than usual |
| 9. been feeling unhappy or depressed? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 10. been losing confidence in yourself? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 11. been thinking of yourself as a worthless person? | Not at all | No more than usual | Rather more than usual | Much more than usual |
| 12. been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered? | More so than usual | Same as usual | Less so than usual | Much less than usual |

**16. Have you experienced any life-stressing events (i.e. operation, injury, moving house, being left unemployed, family difficulties, etc.) over the last few weeks?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***please describe*** _____

## Experience of the Troubles

**17a. Were any of your family or close relatives killed because of the violence of the Troubles?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***when did this happen?***

**17b. Were any of your family or close relatives injured because of the violence of the Troubles?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***when did this happen?***

**18. Did you know anyone (not family or relatives) who was killed or injured in the violence?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***when did this happen?***

**19. Were you or your partner/spouse affected by any conflict-related violent incidents (eg injured, house attacked, intimidated…)?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***what and when did this happen?***

**If you answered 'no' to the questions 17, 18 and 19, go to question 24**.

**20. If you were affected in some way by the Troubles, how do you think you have coped with the loss/injury?**

Well ☐ Fairly well ☐ Badly ☐

**21. Has anyone helped you to cope?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If yes,* ***who helped and how?***

**22. Can you talk freely to your family about this incident/incidents?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

**23. Overall, do you consider yourself to have been a victim or survivor of the Troubles?**

Victim ☐ Survivor ☐ Neither ☐

**24. How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?**

**A. All those people who were killed or injured as a result of the conflict should be seen as victims equally no matter whether they were civilians, paramilitaries or members of the security forces.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agree strongly | ☐ | Disagree | ☐ |
| Agree | ☐ | Disagree strongly | ☐ |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ | Don't know | ☐ |

**B. All those people who were bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally no matter whether their loved ones were civilians, paramilitaries or members of the security forces.**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agree strongly | ☐ | Disagree | ☐ |
| Agree | ☐ | Disagree strongly | ☐ |
| Neither agree nor disagree | ☐ | Don't know | ☐ |

**If you answered 'no' to questions 17, 18 and 19, go to question 28.**

## Communication with your child

**25. Have you ever talked with your child about your experience/s of the Troubles?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

*If not,* ***please explain***

*If yes,* ***do/did you…?*** [please tick all that apply]

- Make a comment/briefly mention something/someone ☐
- Explain concisely an incident/talk about someone ☐
- Give a detailed account of event/s ☐
- Have an open conversation about it (with the child asking questions and you answering) ☐

***How often?***

- Only once or twice ☐
- A few times ☐
- Regularly (How regularly? _____) ☐
- Other (please specify) _____ ☐

**26a. In general, how easy/difficult do you find to talk about your experience/s of the Troubles with your child?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Impossible | ☐ | Neither easy nor difficult | ☐ |
| Very difficult | ☐ | A bit easy | ☐ |
| Difficult | ☐ | Easy | ☐ |
| A bit difficult | ☐ | Very easy | ☐ |

**26b. What kind of things do you find easy to talk with your child about?**

**26c. What kind of things do you find difficult to talk with your child about?**

**27. Has anybody else talked with your child about their experience/s of the Troubles?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

*If yes,* ***who?*** _____

***Please describe the context***

***How often?***

## Children's own experiences

**28. Has your child experienced any sectarian incident (eg verbal or physical attack, intimidation, etc)?**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

*If yes,* ***what happened?***

***How many times has it happened?*** _____

***How did you find out?***

| | |
|---|---|
| He/she explained it to you | ☐ |
| He/she explained it to somebody else in the family | ☐ |
| You found out through a neighbour or friend | ☐ |
| Other (please specify _____) | ☐ |

***Have you been able to talk about it with him/her?*** Yes ☐ No ☐

## Children's behaviour

**29. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**

**Listed below is a set of statements which could be used to describe your child's behaviour. For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. Please answer all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months.**

| | Not true | Somewhat true | Certainly true |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. Considerate of other people's feelings | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b. Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| c. Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| d. Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| e. Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| f. Rather solitary, tends to play alone | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| g. Generally obedient, usually does what adults request | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| h. Many worries, often seems worried | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| i. Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| j. Constantly fidgeting or squirming | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| k. Has at least one good friend | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| l. Often fights with other children or bullies them | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| m. Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| n. Generally liked by other children | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| o. Easily distracted, concentration wanders | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| p. Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| q. Kind to younger children | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| r. Often lies or cheats | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| s. Picked on or bullied by other children | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| t. Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| u. Thinks things out before acting | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| v. Steals from home, school or elsewhere | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| w. Gets on better with adults than with other children | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| x. Many fears, easily scared | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| y. Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Thank you very much for taking part in this research. Your participation is very much appreciated.**

**Please put questionnaire into sealed envelope provided together with consent form and give it to your child to return to teacher.**

## APPENDIX 2: PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

**School of Education**
**Queen's University of Belfast**
**Research Project**

## PARICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (FOR PARENTS)

## Children drawing their own conclusions: Trans-generational transmission of past experiences

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Children have been regarded as the hope for a peaceful society in countries that have just come out of a long political civil conflict. This study aims mainly to explore how parental experiences of the Troubles are reflected in children's drawings of life in Northern Ireland, whether or not and how parents transmit their experiences to their children, and if there are any differences between girls' and boys' drawings.

You and your child are invited to take part in this study because your child was born after the 1994 ceasefires, and your child goes to school in Northern Ireland.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will not need to do anything, but if you do not want yourself or/and your child to participate, you need to sign the refusal form in this letter and return it to your child's teacher in the school within two weeks. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw your child and yourself from the study at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the relationship you and your child have with his/her school.

If you decide to take part, firstly, your child (if he/she also agrees) will be asked to draw two pictures about their own lives, within his/her classroom and with the teacher present. After your child completes the drawings, still inside the class, he/she will be asked individually to describe and explain briefly his/her pictures. His/her response will be tape-recorded. Secondly, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire with general questions about yourself; questions regarding how you have been affected by the Troubles, if you have; questions regarding your communication with your child; questions regarding your views on the peace process; a few questions regarding your opinion on gender roles; and questions regarding your child's behaviour. If you do not want to answer any question for whatever reason, you do not need to. This questionnaire will be given to your child in a sealed envelope to hand to you. The envelope will contain a consent form as well. You will be asked to put your questionnaire and the signed consent form in another sealed envelope (provided), and give it to your child to return to his/her teacher within one week. The envelopes will be collected from your child's school.

All information which is collected about you and your child during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you and your child will not include your names, so you cannot be recognised from it. The anonymised data will be kept securely for two years and then destroyed in accordance with the QUB Data Disposal Policy.

The research is part of my PhD in the School of Education, in Queen's University Belfast, and has been reviewed by a university-based school research ethics committee. The research is supervised by Dr Karola Dillenburger. Results are likely to be published in a thesis and in relevant journals, and presented at conferences.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address specified below. Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

# REFUSAL FORM

**Title of Project: Children drawing their own conclusions: Trans-generational transmission of past experiences.**

Montserrat Fargas

**Please tick box**

1. I do not agree for my child to take part in this study. ☐

2. I do not agree to take part in this study. ☐

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

## APPENDIX 3: CHILDREN'S INFORMATION SHEET

## Would you like to take part in my study?

### What is this study about?

I am trying to find out what children your age think about living in Northern Ireland now and how they think it was like before they were born.

### Why you?

Because I feel that it is important to hear the voices of the young people themselves about what it is like living where you live.

### What will happen if you choose to take part?

I will ask you to draw two pictures about living in Northern Ireland and then, I will ask you to explain to me briefly what you have drawn. I will tape-record your explanation, if that is ok with you. Everything will take about an hour in total. There are no right or wrong drawings, I am just interested in what you have to say and draw! I hope you'll have fun taking part.

### When? and Where?

If you and more of your class mates decide to take part, I will come to your classroom between (month) and (month/year) at a time that it is suitable. Your teacher and fellow classmates will also be there.

### Do you have to take part?

No. If you do not want to take part, that's fine. If you are not sure about taking part, take your time to decide. Talk to your parents or someone else if it helps.

### Can you change your mind about taking part?

Of course. If, at any time during the activity, you don't want to take part anymore, just tell me or tell your teacher. Nobody will be cross with you.

### Will I tell anyone what you say?

No-one else will know what you say or which are your drawings because I won't use names when I write up your and other children's views; but if you say anything that I think your teacher needs to know (like something that makes me worry about you), I will let you know before I tell them.

---

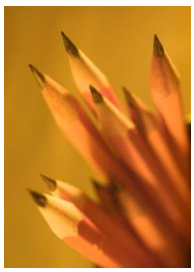
### What happens when the research ends?

I will send a big poster to your class with your and your classmates drawings (with no names). I will also send you a certificate of your participation.
Then, I will write a long report with your and other children's drawings and views.

**Thank you for reading this – please feel free to ask any questions if you need to.**

If you have any questions, or want more information, you can talk to me by phone 028 9097 1176, or email: m.fargas@qub.ac.uk.

**CHILDREN'S INFORMATION SHEET**



**CHILDREN DRAWING IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

# APPENDIX 4: POSTER


Children drawing their own conclusions
Primary School
P7
Living in Northern Ireland now
Living in Northern Ireland before I was born
21st April 2010